# THE SACRED SEASONS

THE RIGHT REV. HANDLEY MOULE, D.D.
LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM

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# THE SACRED SEASONS

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*READINGS*
*FOR*
*THE SUNDAYS & HOLY DAYS*
*OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR*

FROM THE WRITINGS
OF THE RIGHT REVEREND
HANDLEY C. G. MOULE, D.D
BISHOP OF DURHAM

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TO

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FOR EVER WITH THE LORD

AND

IN THE LORD

WITH US

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*The decorations have been arranged and drawn by Miss E. A. Ibbs, chiefly from illuminated manuscripts in the British Museum.*

# CONTENTS


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| The First Sunday in Advent | 1 |
| The Second Sunday in Advent | 5 |
| The Third Sunday in Advent | 10 |
| The Fourth Sunday in Advent | 14 |
| Christmas Day | 19 |
| St. Stephen | 23 |
| St. John the Evangelist | 26 |
| The Holy Innocents | 29 |
| The First Sunday after Christmas | 33 |
| The Circumcision of Christ | 37 |
| The Second Sunday after Christmas | 40 |
| The Epiphany | 43 |
| The First Sunday after the Epiphany | 47 |
| The First Sunday after the Epiphany | 50 |
| The Second Sunday after the Epiphany | 52 |
| The Third Sunday after the Epiphany | 56 |
| The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany | 61 |
| The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany | 66 |
| The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany | 71 |
| Septuagesima Sunday | 76 |
| Sexagesima Sunday | 80 |
| Quinquagesima Sunday | 84 |
| Ash Wednesday | 88 |

# Contents


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| The First Sunday in Lent | 93 |
| The Second Sunday in Lent | 96 |
| The Third Sunday in Lent | 100 |
| The Fourth Sunday in Lent | 104 |
| The Fifth Sunday in Lent | 108 |
| The Sunday next before Easter | 113 |
| The Monday before Easter | 117 |
| The Tuesday before Easter | 118 |
| The Wednesday before Easter | 119 |
| The Thursday before Easter | 122 |
| Good Friday | 126 |
| Easter Even | 130 |
| Easter Sunday | 133 |
| Easter Monday | 138 |
| Easter Tuesday | 143 |
| The First Sunday after Easter | 146 |
| The Second Sunday after Easter | 151 |
| The Third Sunday after Easter | 156 |
| The Fourth Sunday after Easter | 160 |
| The Fifth Sunday after Easter | 166 |
| Ascension Day | 171 |
| The Sunday after Ascension Day | 176 |
| Whitsunday | 181 |
| Whit Monday | 186 |
| Whit Tuesday | 189 |
| Trinity Sunday | 191 |
| The First Sunday after Trinity | 195 |
| The Second Sunday after Trinity | 199 |
| The Third Sunday after Trinity | 204 |

# Contents


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| The Fourth Sunday after Trinity | 209 |
| The Fifth Sunday after Trinity | 214 |
| The Sixth Sunday after Trinity | 219 |
| The Seventh Sunday after Trinity | 225 |
| The Eighth Sunday after Trinity | 229 |
| The Ninth Sunday after Trinity | 233 |
| The Tenth Sunday after Trinity | 238 |
| The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity | 242 |
| The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity | 247 |
| The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity | 252 |
| The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity | 256 |
| The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity | 260 |
| The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity | 265 |
| The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity | 269 |
| The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity | 275 |
| The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity | 280 |
| The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity | 285 |
| The Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity | 290 |
| The Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity | 295 |
| The Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity | 300 |
| The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity | 304 |
| The Sunday next before Advent | 308 |
| St. Andrew | 313 |
| St. Thomas | 316 |
| The Conversion of St. Paul | 319 |
| The Purification | 322 |
| St. Matthias | 325 |
| The Annunciation | 327 |
| St. Mark | 330 |

# Contents


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| St. Philip and St. James | 333 |
| St. Barnabas | 335 |
| St. John Baptist | 338 |
| St. Peter | 341 |
| St. James the Apostle | 344 |
| St. Bartholomew | 347 |
| St. Matthew | 349 |
| St. Michael and All Angels | 351 |
| St. Luke | 354 |
| St. Simon and St. Jude | 356 |
| All Saints | 359 |

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." *Titus* ii. *13.*

## The first Sunday in Advent

Almighty Saviour, Lord Jesus Christ, Thou wast, and art, and art to come. We know Thee as our Redeemer and Strength, and now at this season we behold Thee also especially as our Hope, and we look up and lift up our heads in the glorious prospect of Thy second Coming. Let us not forget the awe of that Return of Thine. Thou comest both to judge the world and to reckon with Thine own servants. But by Thy grace keep us so abiding in Thee that when Thou shalt appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Thee at Thy coming. And fill us also with holy longings for the sight of Thee, Thou fairest of ten thousand, our King in Thine eternal beauty; who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God of Love. Amen.

# THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

## THE "I COME" OF RETURN

FOUR times over in the Book of the Revelation the glorified Saviour speaks explicitly the "I come" of His sure and speedy RETURN. "Behold, I come quickly; hold fast that thou hast" (Rev. iii. 11); "Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (xxii. 7); "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me" (xxii. 12); and "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen" (xxii. 20). Great is the emphasis, mighty and holy indeed the import, of such a personal promise. Let us comment a little on this "I come," so as to meet equally (as I think we may do) the hearts of *all* Christians who look forward to a literal and glorious Coming, as the great Church of God has looked from the first. The mysterious bliss of the Thousand Years, and the questions gathered round the word "Pre-millennial," may *practically* be

laid out of view sometimes in this matter, and believing students may sometimes meet, as it were, behind them. It is somehow possible for *all* who love and submit to the written Word, and hold heartily that definite prediction is a divine reality in that Word, to look up *together* into heaven, "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," "loving His appearing," "looking for the Saviour, who shall change our body of humiliation," and who shall welcome us to "meet Him in the air." It is possible somehow for us *all* to be thus standing with our loins girded and our lamps aflame, as men waiting for their Lord, and not knowing in what watch of the night He will come and knock on a sudden.

"*Behold, I come quickly; surely I come quickly; this same Jesus.*" What common ground for loving, solemn meditation may we find here? In the "*quickly*" of the promise we are all to read that the disciple's attitude, as it was with the Israelite of the Exodus, is to be that of the man whose shoes are on his feet, and his staff in his hand, *ready*. It is an old story, but never out of date, certainly not in this age of enormous worldliness, this "hour when they think not." "Let not this world our rest appear," no, not even when it looks at us through well-loved and fruitful work, or

through the joys of a pure and happy home: "all these things are dissolving." In the very midst of them, in His own time, He who comes as the thief in the night, but who is also (blessed be His name) the midnight Friend, will be here—and a very different order of things will begin with that Arrival. Is the prospect being recollected and cherished? Are we maintaining it in the soul's sanctuary as a dear and joyful one, so far as our own personality is concerned? We may, we must, cultivate such a view of Him as shall naturally spring up into an instant and enraptured welcome, "My Saviour, O my Saviour," come when He may, come in upon what He will—"the King in His beauty."

And let us think quite simply of that part of the promise (which is indeed the heart of it) which tells us that it will be personally HE, and that with Him, in direct personal contact, we, each one, I and you, will have to do. The Return will be a time, a moment, a crisis, never to eternity to be forgotten; a point of interview between the disciple and the Master, the servant and the Lord, at the solemn close of this working day. Labourer for Him, speaker in His name, "fetch that day to thee, and make it thy company keeper." We are all, we are each, on our way to "give account of the things done in the body," of what we have "gained

by trading," of how we have lived for Him. We are on our way to an interview with our Master in which, even for the saved ones who shall be with Him for ever, *an enquiry* will take place as complete as Christ can make it. And the report upon it will be made as only He can make it. "He will manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have his praise of God."

"How shall I meet His eyes?" As regards acceptance—only by looking from them to His hands and His side, and hiding there. As regards all other aspects of the matter—by "walking in the light" with Him now, on the way to see Him face to face in that examination then.

"*Prayers and Promises.*"

# THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

## THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

HOWEVER this Book, the Old Testament, came to be, in detail, there it is before us, a thing august, mysterious, unique. There is nothing really like it upon the earth.

There are other books, old Sacred Books of Gentile religions, and those books have in them many a passage which indicates that law which God, in conscience, gives to man. They are not to be thrown aside, neglected or despised, by the Christian reader; from every one of them may be gathered precious things of precept and of fact. Yet they are not therefore Bibles; they are not even secondary Bibles. The Koran of Mahomet, the Zend-Avesta of ancient Persia, the "classics" of Confucius in China, these writings are not Bibles. And why? Because they have no *imprimatur* put upon them by One who had proved Himself to be the Lord of the unseen. There is nothing in the world of literature

upon which God has set His seal as He has set it, in the Person of Christ, upon this Book. There it stands, in that respect—not in all respects, but in that respect—unique of its kind. It is the solitary specimen of a book given through men but countersigned by God—as a Literature which He built, as a System which He designed, a Work which He superintended. It is, as the One Author who stood behind the many authors designed it to be — the Oracle of God.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

*For all the things forewritten*, written in the Scriptures of the elder time, in the age that both preceded the Gospel and prepared for it, *for our instruction were written* (with an emphasis upon "*our*"), *that through the patience and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might hold fast our hope*, the hope, "sure and steadfast," of glorification in the glory of our conquering Lord. That is to say, the true "Author behind the authors" of that mysterious Book watched, guided, effected its construction, from end to end, with the purpose full in His view of instructing for all time the developed Church of Christ. And in particular, He adjusted thus the *Old Testament* records and precepts of "patience"—the patience which "suffers

and is strong," suffers and goes forward—and of "encouragement," the word which means more than "consolation," while it includes it; for it means the voice of positive and enlivening appeal. Rich indeed are Pentateuch, and Prophets, and Hagiographa, alike in commands to persevere and be of good courage, and in examples of men who were made brave and patient by the power of God in them, as they took Him at His Word. And all this, says the Apostle, was on purpose, on God's purpose. That multifarious Book is indeed in this sense one. Not only is it, in its Author's intention, full of Christ; in the same intention it is full of Him *for us*. Immortal indeed is its preciousness if this was His design. Confidently may we explore its pages, looking in them first for Christ, then for ourselves, in our need of peace, and strength, and hope. The use of the Holy Book—of those "Divine Scriptures" as the Christian Fathers love to call them—in the spirit of this verse, the persistent searching of it for the preceptive mind of God in it, with the belief that it was "written for our instruction," will be the surest and deepest means to give us "perseverance" and "encouragement" about the Book itself. The more we really *know* the Bible, at first hand, before God, with the knowledge both of acquaintance and reverent sympathy, the more shall

we be able, with intelligent spiritual conviction, to "persist" and "be of good cheer" in the conviction that it is indeed not *of* man (though *through* man) but of God. The more shall we use it as the Lord and the Apostles used it, as being not only of God but of God for us; His Word, and for us. The more shall we make it our divine daily manual for a life of patient and cheerful sympathies, holy fidelity, and "that blessed Hope"—which draws "nearer now than when we believed."

"*The Epistle to the Romans.*"

It is in special connexion with the life of Christian Holiness, the life of new Obedience, that I speak of Scripture study; and specially in view of the fact that Scripture is the one *articulate* account, by the Lord Himself, of His "will in Jesus Christ concerning us." For you, believing friend, who long to know and to do His will, as at once your rest and your goal, let the Bible bear *this* aspect of sacredness very specially, that it is the one definite and articulate utterance of that Will by our Master Himself. From this point of view how singular is the value of the hundred and nineteenth Psalm! It has been beautifully said that the essence of the thought of that Psalm is, the sacredness and sweetness of God's Will, to be known and done by

His bond-servant; so that we may reverently read, as it were, the word "will" into it, as a synonym for "law," "statutes," "judgments," "precepts," and the rest. Try this holy gloss, and see how the verses shine with the glory of a loving surrender to the will of God. But then, on the other hand, beyond all question, the Psalm in its direct purpose is one long strain of prayer, and praise, and self-consecration, *over the Bible*. The saintly soul's thirst after the Will of God leads it not to the mirage, but to the waterspring of the Word. With every access of love and longing, with every step in conscience and obedience, he feels new need of the Book, he bends over it, he bows to it. So be it with you and with me.

"*Thoughts on the Spiritual Life.*"

# THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

*"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."*—Rev. iii. 20.

*WILL come in to him.*" The context is solemnly familiar. All know the Laodicean Epistle; all have felt the awful penetration of its reproofs, convictions, and threatenings. Not least have we done so who are the ordained ministers of Christ and His flock; we remember that the words were immediately addressed to a chief pastor. We have heard the heavenly Master speaking through these verses; finding us out in some miserable moment, it may be, of spiritual self-complacency, of satisfaction with our own words or works; telling us that at such moments we are the "poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked." The very name of Laodicea has derived thus in our minds an association with shame and alarm. Most rightly, from one side. But then let the convinced clergyman, the convinced Christian, remember on

the other side that, if there are Laodicean threatenings, there is also this most glorious, this most tender, endearing, Laodicean promise, "I will come in to him."

Let us look at the promise itself.

Full of holy pathos as well as divine instruction is the imagery in which its lies. A dwelling-place is before us, and its door is fastened from within. The shadows gather, for it is the hour of the evening meal. "Behold a Stranger's at the door"; yet not a stranger too, for He has once been within. He is the sovereign King of house and inhabitant. Now, somehow, the King stands outside, and the door is barred, while all within is dark, and cold, and out of gear, and the man sits in the gloom, moody and miserable, or sleeps heavily on the unrestful bed. The King knocks, and speaks. He will not apply force of hand. Not that He has no gentle omnipotence, no prevalence and secret drawing, or that He will not use it. But "He *enforceth not* the will"; His will shall take effect in and through His servant's repentant willingness. Once let the servant listen, and walk to the dark chamber's door, and move the bar, and lift the latch; lo, without a moment's more ado, without one prefatory condition, without one grudge because of the treasonable past, the King will enter. And His entrance shall be the signal

for light and warmth within, for love, and friendship, and plenty, and a wonderful mutual hospitality. He will at once sit down to the table, and let His servant be His host. And He will then Himself make His servant His guest, and be Himself the bountiful Host, within the man's lately famished and gloomy dwelling.

Such shall be the secret spiritual Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ in this soul which lets Him in at His knock, at His request. It shall be a definite and personal Advent, an In-coming, to a presence and abode such as *was not* just before. Jesus Christ shall be *in* that man's inner chamber of the soul, in a sense and manner positive and special. He shall be there not to find, but to make, light and order within; to be the Fire on the hearth, the Lamp on the table. He shall be there as Guest, to feast upon the one provision the man can set before Him, the one provision which the King cares to accept, and which He loves to taste—the presented and surrendered will and life of the servant. And He shall be there as Host. He shall crown the poor table with the living bread and the new wine of the eternal Kingdom. He shall transfigure the narrow chamber into His own "banqueting house," feeding and filling the self-starved being with Himself, with all He does *for* His happy followers, and

with all He is *in* them. And the imagery of the table suggests not only food but converse.

The woeful estrangement, the dull, rebellious silence on the one side, the solemn, censuring reserve on the other, are over. Host and guest, guest and Host, they look into each other's face, they hear the utterance of each other's heart: "I am thine, thou art mine; nothing between."

"I will love him, and will manifest myself to him;" "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;" "Eat, O friend; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

"*Prayers and Promises.*"

# THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

*"Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is near."*—PHIL. iv. 5.

THE word "moderation" in this verse is not quite self-explanatory. Neither moderation in the sense of self-government, nor its counterfeit, moderation in the sense of *point de zèle*, is in view in this verse; most surely not the latter. Not that the Gospel here or elsewhere means therefore to inculcate a hot, untempered, inconsiderate enthusiasm. Indeed, enthusiasm is not a New Testament word; and no wonder, when we remember that its old connexion was with the frenzied excitements of the Greek worship of Bacchus. Enthusiasm is not, indeed, a word to be discarded; yet it is a word which too often suggests hasty and ill-considered resolutions, a flow of animal excitement very likely to ebb, a heat that outruns light. And all these are things of nature, not of grace; of fallen,

not of regenerate humanity. The zeal and love of the Gospel spring from deeper and purer wells, have a serener flow, and are altogether nobler things than what commonly passes under the name of enthusiasm.

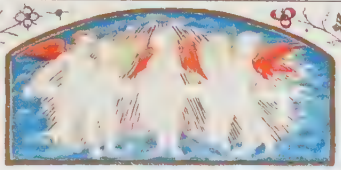
But the Apostle here is looking in quite another direction. The word here rendered moderation in our Bible is connected by derivation and usage with ideas not of control but of yielding. It is rendered *Lindigkeit*, "yieldingness, giving way," in Luther's German Bible; and I fully believe the interpretation to be right. "Forbearance," "gentleness," are the alternative renderings of our Revised Version, and both suggest the thought of giving way. "Let your yieldingness be known unto all men; the Lord is near." St. Paul is dealing throughout this passage with certain holy conditions necessary to an experience of "the peace of God, keeping the hearts and thoughts, in Christ Jesus." Standing fast in the Lord, harmony and mutual helpfulness in the Lord, rejoicing in the Lord, and prayerful and thankful communion with the Lord, are among these conditions. And with them, in the midst of them, appears this also: "Let your yieldingness be known unto all men; the Lord is near." This connexion with the deep peace of God throws a glory over the word and the precept. The yieldingness which is here enjoined is nothing

akin to weakness, indolence, or indifference. It is a positive grace of the Spirit; it flows from the fulness of Jesus Christ.

What is it? We shall find the answer partly by remembering how, from another point of view, the Gospel enjoins, and knows how to impart, the most resolute *un*yieldingness. If anything can work the great miracle of making a weak character strong, it is the Gospel. The Gospel can make the regenerate will say "no" to self on a hundred points where never anything but "yes" was heard before. Nothing in the moral world is so immovable as the will of a living Christian, sustained by the power of God the Holy Spirit, on some clear case of principle. Yieldingness in our passage is, in fact, *selflessness*. It is meekness, not weakness; the attitude of a man out of whom the Lord has cast the evil spirit of self. It is the discovery and practice of the blessed secret how to put Jesus Christ upon the throne of life, and to let that divine fact within work upon the life without. It is the grace which manifests itself in a calm, bright, willing superiority of thought and purpose to considerations of self's comfort, credit, influence. It is the noble, the holy readiness to rejoice, for instance, in the success of others in the field of Christian work, as simply and naturally as in our own. It is the aim not to get a reputation,

but to walk and please God; not to secure the applause of others, but to compass their good and blessing; not to vindicate our opinion, but only and purely our Lord's word and truth; not to be first, but where He would put us; not to get our rights, for our sake, but to be loyal to His claims, and attentive, for His sake, with a scrupulous and kindly attention, to the rights and wants of others. Nothing does the world's microscope discover more keenly than "self-fulness" in a Christian man or woman. Nothing at once baffles its experience and explanation, and attracts its notice and respect, like the genuine selflessness, the yieldingness, of the grace of God. Let ours, then, "be known unto all men"—not paraded and thrown into an attitude, but kept in practice and use in real life, where it can be put to real tests. And would we read something, in this same verse, of its heavenly secret? It lies before us: "the Lord is near." He is near, not here in the sense of coming soon, but in that of standing by; in the sense of His presence, and "the secret" of it, around His servant. The thought is of the calm and overshadowing of His recollected and realized Presence; that divine atmosphere in which bitter things, and things narrow with the contractions and distortions of self, must die, and in which all that is sweet and loving lives.

"*Thoughts on the Spiritual Life.*"



THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, OR THE BIRTHDAY OF CHRIST, COMMONLY CALLED

# Christmas Day

BLESSED be Thy name, Lord Jesus, Son of God, and Son of Man. We greet with joy this dear Day, the day of the Angels' song, and of Thy lying in the cradle of the manger. Unto us, even unto us, a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. For us men and for our salvation Thou, God, the Son of God, didst become also Man, the Son of Woman; Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb. To Thee be glory and thanksgiving. Amen.

When in the pathway of God's will
Thou seemest at a stand,
Fretting for wings to scale the hill,
And tired of foot and hand;

At blessed Bethlehem leave thy gloom;
There learn divine content;
By Manger, Workshop, Cross and Tomb
Thy Lord to triumph went.

## CHRISTMAS DAY

*"Then said He, Lo, I have come to do Thy will, O God."*
—Heb. x. 9.

*"Then said I, Lo, I have come: I delight to do Thy will."*
—Ps. xl. 7, 8.

INVITE you this Christmas Day to a *sursum corda*. Let us look up from beside the sacred Cradle to the Heaven of heavens, and ponder a little while that great antecedent to Bethlehem, the Self-Consecration of the Eternal Son to His incarnate life and work.

This lies here before us in the Scriptures of the text, in the New Testament and in the Old.

The Scripture, with both its hands, the prophetic and the apostolic, lifts for us here the veil, and discloses to us "the mind that was in Christ Jesus," when, in the eternity which is above our time, He, the Son, "beloved before the foundation of the universe," willed to come down, and to become flesh. It utters to us the thought with which He, being true God, elected to be also true Man. It lets us

hear His resolve to come, and to do the Father's will in saving us.

. . . . . .

As we stand listening to the voice which thus, even from the divine glory, speaks of surrender and of service, let us, with the Scriptures in our memory, recall in shortest summary some of the truths told us through this utterance, "Lo, I have come to do Thy will."

*Why* does He come, as to the immediate and urgent element of His purpose? What is the aim set *in the foreground* of the eternal thought, indicated in the Psalm and developed in the Epistle? Is it, immediately, to knit up mankind together into one? Is it, immediately, to redeem the race—by Incarnation? It is, immediately, to be "Sacrifice and Offering." It is to do at last the work which the altar, under the old law, could never do. It is that the Incarnate, being such, "might put away sins by the sacrifice of Himself." Such was the first, ruling purpose of the Self-Consecration of the Son. The Self-Consecrator had in view, above all things, His Death, His Sacrifice, His Expiation, His Propitiation. Psalm, and Hebrews, and Philippians, all, in this matter, gravitate upon the Crucifixion. "A body hast Thou prepared me." "He took share and share, with His brethren, in flesh and blood, that by *means of*

*death* He might destroy him that had the power of death." "Being the brightness of the Father's glory, by Himself He *purged our sins*." "He became obedient, even to the length of the death of the Cross."

. . . . . .

The Scriptures are eloquent of the pain and yet joy of the untold Humiliation of the Lord. They tell us of His willingness to be made like us, with a likeness that should be no trope or figure, but a reality to its depths. They reveal His divinely free consent, in the full light of God, to enter personally within the essential and sinless limitations of Humanity. He willed, as Man, to experience what is meant by growth and development, what it is to weep and to wonder, what it should be to say, "Thy will be done," not only in heaven, as the Son Eternal, but as the Son of Man, under the olives of Gethsemane. He willed to cry, when the last darkness gathered round the Cross, to Him whose will He was wholly content to do, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" He willed to commit the out-going Human Spirit into His hands, in the awfulness of human death.

. . . . . .

Let us end where we set out, in faith and in adoration, before the Self-Consecrating Saviour.

We are keeping the festival of joy. The splendour of God, once poured upon the field of the shepherds,

shines for ever upon this day. The great carol of the warrior-angels, the quiring "heavenly army," sounds on for ever in our winter sky. For us men God is made Man.

But the roots of our Christian joy are watered with the sorrows and the Sacrifice of our Redeemer. They cost Him dear. They involved His infinite Humiliation. As we rejoice, let it be with that thought in our souls. Let us bless Him with the love of penitents; let us follow Him with the love of witnessing disciples. "Lo, I have come." So said the Son of God, in view of His Cradle and of His Cross, as He saw them from above all the heavens. "Lo, I have come to do Thy will." And we are His. We are, through His grace, in Him. Then let it be ours, this day, this Birthday, to say the like, in our little measure, as if we had never said it before, for His sake and in His name. For trial, for humiliation, for the death of self-will, for whatever may be for us "the cross," let us, His members, draw from Him the power to say, "I have come," and to "delight to do the will of Him that sent us, and to finish His work."

"*The Secret of the Presence.*"

# ST. STEPHEN

*"When the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed."*
—Acts xxii. 20.

THIS, you remember, is the reminiscence of St. Paul—he looked back and recalled the day when he kept the raiment of them who hurled the stones against the dying Stephen. Then he had looked on him as a man blasphemous toward God and a traitor to the hopes of Israel. Now he recalls him, in the light of his own knowledge of Jesus, as "Thy martyr Stephen." Let us think a little to-day, with St. Paul, about holy Stephen and about the martyr spirit, and the claim of the religion of Jesus that the martyr spirit should be present in His followers.

Stephen was chosen at first to be a server of tables; even for that work, let us note it well, the apostolic Church thought it needful that the server should be "full of the Holy Ghost and faith." And doubtless in that divine power Stephen did his daily duty with

wisdom and diligence. But he could not help overflowing into other work. He wrought great miracles, and he bore powerful witness, till opposition came, and then arrest, and then trial by the Sanhedrim, and then he was cast out of the city and stoned, yielding up his spirit to the Lord, having first seen in a wonderful vision where that spirit was going:—"I see heaven opened, and the Son of Man"—not now sitting, but, in that great hour, to succour and to meet him—"*standing*, at the right hand of God." So fell the first man who yielded up his soul in violent death as a martyr, that is to say, a witness, to his glorified Redeemer. From that day literally to this the martyr line has been continuous. To refer only to modern times, there have been martyrs by hundreds in Armenia, Madagascar, and Uganda, and by many thousands in China, in the great persecution of 1900. The anguish and the glory of these our martyred brethren make us also, as disciples of Christ, ask what is there in His Gospel that can claim such sacrifices.

What is the essence of the martyr spirit? Circumstances may differ infinitely, and to the vast majority of Christians in all ages the actual experience of violent death has not occurred. But *the essence* is for all places and for all times. For it is just this—the willingness, in the name and in the power of Christ, to suffer anything rather than deny Him, and

violate His will. Such a spirit is present when a Stephen dies by the stones, a Paul by the sword, a Polycarp by the fire, an Ignatius by the beasts. But it is present also when a John is ready for the like fate, but is called to confess his Master in a long life. It is present when the Christian of to-day, in any degree in which God asks for it, is ready to suffer for his Lord in mind, in feeling, in money, in reputation. Wherever in any way suffering and loss is preferred to unfaithfulness to the will and name of Jesus, there, just so far, is the spirit of the martyrs.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

*"And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."*—Rev. i. 17, 18.

I ASK you to-day to watch St. John, far along his course, towards the close of his following of His Lord; not now by the shore of the peaceful Lake, but in the late evening of a life so long, laborious, and burthened, waiting till he should meet Jesus again. The "beloved disciple" was in the Isle of Patmos, probably in the act of suffering for the Gospel's sake; for he appears to have been in exile, and was perhaps condemned to penal toil. Then, on a certain day, "the Lord's Day," he "was in the Spirit," and saw things we cannot see, and heard things that ears untrained cannot hear, and met his Master once again. Perhaps sixty years had passed away since that scene by the Lake of Tiberias when he had "followed"

along the beach. Friends had gone, times had changed, and the Church was undergoing "fiery trials." And John had been labouring on, and suffering on, growing in grace, growing in the Spirit's power, till now, in that wonderful and ripened sanctity of his old age, there came to him this supernatural manifestation of his Lord. What was the effect upon him of the sight of the glorified Jesus? It caused the collapse of his whole being; it was, if I may use the word, an unspeakable physical shock. Think of the wonder of this. Here is no unconverted sinner, but the most advanced and spiritual of saints. And he sees, presented to his consciousness, the full glory, the full and awful holiness, of Jesus Christ. And he falls at His feet as dead. Let this remind us that the sight of Christ, which is the secret of all joy, is also, and first, the most abasing thing that can ever be. Are we not yet low enough before God? If so, it is not only because we have not yet seen enough of ourselves; it is because we have not yet seen enough of our Saviour and our King.

But now, how does our Lord meet St. John's abasement? Does He spurn him? Does He leave him there, and turn away? No, in His majestic tenderness He takes His prostrate servant literally by the hand. He puts His own infinite dignity and

holiness into direct contact with the nothingness of His mortal follower, and says, "Fear not." When the soul is at His feet, silent and convinced, and when His hand is laid upon it so, tender indeed and all-effectual is the utterance, "Fear not."

But let us listen again. "*I* am He that liveth and was dead, and *I* am alive for evermore." These are the supreme reasons not to be afraid, and they lie wholly in HIMSELF. Great is the joy of our first real grasp of the fact that we are dealing with "the *living* One," with the Lord who liveth and loveth, the same in His personality to-day as yesterday, and not only so, but to-morrow and for ever. And then, "I *was dead*"; or, more literally, "I became dead." The Lord of life will not let the believing soul forget His death. He seems to say, "Behold me; on me was laid that sin of thine, the consciousness of which now lays thee at my feet." And then, "I *am alive* for evermore." Thanks be to the Saviour who became dead, but now liveth—liveth to be every moment the personal Friend of His saved ones, and also, as the living One who was dead, to apply and shower down on the believer "the innumerable benefits of His Passion."

*Notes of a Sermon.*

## THE HOLY INNOCENTS

### ON THE DEATH OF A LITTLE CHILD

THINK not, because so early with our King
He rests, before his infancy's fourth spring,
That aught is lacking, in the eternal eye,
To that dear life's full orb and rounded history.
Nay, in His sovereign prescience and fore-will
Who works unerring for His people still,
Not Abraham's end, nor John's late-enter'd bliss,
Marks a more finish'd pilgrimage than this.
No casual stroke removed him, and surprised
That Artist who of old his date devised.
To us all looks abrupt, a fragment, torn
Before the perfect close; and so we mourn.
But He, great Poet of the souls He saves,
Writes now His epics, now His shorter staves,
His tender nursery songs; and these disclose
As fine a skill, as full an art, as those.

This bright, brief life-time, in His hidden plan,
Through morn and noon to timely sunset ran,
Short prelude, but complete, to that long day
Which knows no end for ever nor decay.

*"To be with Christ; which is far better."*—PHIL. i. 23.

## FAR BETTER

"FAR better"—yes, than pain and care, than weariness and strife,
Than fading hopes and gathering fears, and all the death of life;
Far better than the ceaseless weight of batter'd helm and shield,
Than wounded hands and tottering knees on this world's battle-field.

Far better than to watch with tears beneath a setting sun
The heart's dear treasures, in the wild, reft from us one by one;
Far better than to sit alone amidst the brooding dark,
And shake in many an evil hour for faith's dishonour'd ark.

O better far to fly from hence, for ever, in an hour,
To Him whose presence is the throne of joy, and peace, and power;
For exile here to exchange at length the eternal voice of love,
And these autumnal things below for vernal worlds above.

But stay, shall thoughts like these alone that other shore endear?
Shall those glad hopes be only weigh'd against our sadness here?
Needs it in one long sigh profound Time's sorrows to combine
Ere we can feel that better far is that exchange divine?

Say rather, better far it is to die and be with Him
Than here to hold the cup of peace full to the golden brim;
Though He, the All-giver, mix the wine, and bless it with His hand,
And health, and love, and strength, and hope, within the chalice stand;

# The Holy Innocents

Far better than the charm supreme of Home's
unbroken ring,
Though virtue there and heavenly grace their rarest
treasures bring;
Than childhood's confidence of joy, than boundless
thoughts of youth,
Than manhood's sober gladness found in paths of
faith and truth.

Yes, think of all things at the best; in one rich
thought unite
All purest joys of sense and soul, all earthly love
and light;
Bid Hope and Memory meet at length, and knit
their wreaths in one,
And o'er them shed the tenderest light of Fancy's
inner sun;

Yet, bind the truth upon thy brow and clasp it to
thy heart,
And then nor grief nor gladness here shall claim
too great a part:
All radiance of this lower sky is to that glory dim;
Far better to depart it is, for we shall be with Him.

"*Christianus and other Poems.*"

# THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

## HITHERTO: HENCEFORTH

IT is easy to explain away the interest of the Old Year's night, to say that the crossing the threshold of the New Year is nothing more than the perpetual step forward which we are always taking with every heart-beat. But let us pause for a moment (though we never really do pause) at this milestone, and in the light of God's Word let us look both backward and forward over our way. In 1 Sam. vii. 12 we are told that Samuel set up a stone, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, the Stone of Help, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." There was a long future before Israel, and even to Samuel that future was in a large measure unknown, and wholly untried. But to him the help of the "Hitherto" was a guarantee for the "Henceforth," whatever it might bring. He put up the Stone of Help, a solid, tangible witness of

what God had been in the past, even to that hour. And because He had brought His Israel safe "up to date," they would trust Him to carry them into the dateless future before them. So now, in the name of every deliverance given us in the past, let us put up our stone of help, and remember that every "Hitherto" of the past year is the prelude to a "Henceforth" in the unfailing plan of the love of God.

In St. John v. 17 our Lord says, "My Father worketh *hitherto* and I work." Jesus Christ is a living, a *working* Saviour. As to His atoning Sacrifice, His work is finished; as to the results of His Sacrifice, His work is never finished to all eternity. Have you looked to Him to work in you what is acceptable to God? and have you found Him true? Then give Him thanks for that "Hitherto," and let it fill you with bright expectancy for the "Henceforth" that is to be. Wonderful is the perseverance of our indwelling and *working* Lord, who still goes on despite our frequent failure to co-operate with Him. Shall we not "henceforth," yes, from this day forward, aim at being indeed and in truth "fellow-workers" with God?

And now let us turn to some of the "Henceforths," written on the other side of the milestone as we pass on into the New Year; let us take their

messages of light, and sun our hearts in their warmth. In Micah iv. 7 we read, "The Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion *from henceforth* even for ever." If we look at the context we see the picture of a soul that has been compromising, halting, feeble. Well, let the thus "afflicted" soul turn with a fresh and whole-hearted allegiance to Him, and then what a promise is here of weakness made strong under the sovereignty and mastership of the Lord! If the context of 1 Sam. vii. 12 describes our "Hitherto," let this promise picture our long "Henceforth, even for ever." For we may group it with the assurance of Ps. cxxv. 2: "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people—from henceforth even for ever." Here is the keeping Presence and Power of Him with whom there is no "before" or "after"—who never wearies of His watch, or needs to be relieved of the weight of His weak ones, as they lean helpless upon His strength.

Again we turn to a word from our Lord's own lips, St. John xv. 15: "*Henceforth* I have called you friends." Let us cultivate the "Henceforth" of developed intimacy with Him in this New Year. "That I may know HIM;" here is a study which needs always to be beginning over again.

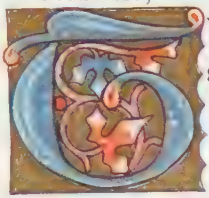
Yet one more of our motto words remains; Heb.

xi. 13: "From *henceforth* expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." The unknown future holds many uncertainties before us; it will bring many a surprise of sorrow and of joy. But one thing within it is certain—all things, whatever they may be, are to be put "under His feet," the feet of Him to whom we belong. He is another year nearer the satisfaction of His heart, nearer the triumph of His people as well as of Himself. Sin now seems often much stronger than righteousness, wrong than right, death than life, the grave than the "blessed hope." But Christ is at the right hand of God, and there He is only waiting, "expecting," till the last enemy, death, shall be made His footstool, and He shall put His foot on death, and sit so in the eternal calm of life.

*He* will not be disappointed, and *we* shall not be, as we cast our every care and need on Him, and go on in Him from our "Hitherto" to our "Henceforth," from the past of His faithfulness to all its future steps, even to His welcome to the endless joy.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

"By Thy holy Nativity and Circumcision, Good Lord, deliver us."—*Litany.*



## The Circumcision of Christ

"My times are in Thy hand." (Ps. xxxi., 5.) The word "times" denotes the ever-changing developments of the chequered surface of life, and they are all in His hand. There is something very calming in this thought. Never can the threads of my life slip out of His hand. The coming, the unknown, lies already safe and certain there.

Lay thou thy Old Year in the tomb
Where slept thy buried Lord;
Like Him, transfigured from the gloom
It yet shall be restored.
Thy New Year carry to the height
Whence He was borne above;
There teach its hours the upward flight
Of faith, and hope, and love.

What joys are lost, what hopes are given,
As through this death-struck world we roam!
We think awhile that Home is Heaven;
We learn at last that Heaven is Home.

# THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST

*"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."*
—Rom. iv. 8.

E note the exposition implied here of the phrase, "to reckon righteousness." It is to treat the man as one whose account is clear. *Happy the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin.* In the phrase itself, "to reckon righteousness" (as in its Latin equivalent, "to impute righteousness"), the question, What clears the account? is not answered. Suppose the impossible case of a record kept absolutely clear by the man's own sinless goodness; then the "reckoned," the "imputed, righteousness," would mean the Law's contentment with him on his own merits. But the context of human sin fixes the actual reference to an "imputation" which means that the awfully defective record is treated, for a divinely valid reason, as if it were, *what it is not*, good. The man is at peace with his Judge, though he has sinned, because the Judge has joined him to

Himself, and taken up his liability, and answered for it to his own Law. The man is dealt with as righteous, being a sinner, for his glorious Redeemer's sake. It is pardon, but more than pardon. It is no mere indulgent dismissal; it is a welcome as of the worthy to the embrace of the Holy One.

Such is the Justification of God. To make Justification a mere synonym for Pardon is always inadequate. Justification is the contemplation and treatment of the penitent sinner, found in Christ, as righteous, as satisfactory to the Law, not merely as one whom the Law lets go.

Now again comes up the question, never far distant in St. Paul's thought, and in his life, what these facts of Justification have to do with Gentile sinners. Here is David, blessing God for his unmerited acceptance—an acceptance, by the way, wholly unconnected with the ritual of the altar. Here, above all, is Abraham, "justified in consequence of faith." But David was a child of the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham was the father of that covenant. Do not their justifications speak only to those who stand, with them, inside that charmed circle? Consider: *How was it then reckoned to Abraham? In circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision;* fourteen years at least had to pass before the covenant rite

was ordained. "*And he received the sign of circumcision* (with a stress upon "*sign*," as if to say that the "thing," the reality signed, was his already) *as a seal on the righteousness of the faith that was in his uncircumcision*"—a seal on the acceptance which he had received, antecedent to all formal privilege, in that bare hand of faith.

So privilege had nothing to do with acceptance, except to countersign the grant of a grace absolutely free. The seal did nothing whatever to *make* the Covenant. It only verified the fact, and guaranteed the *bona fides* of the Giver. As the Christian Sacraments are, so was the Patriarchal Sacrament, circumcision; it was "a sure testimony and effectual sign of God's grace and good will." But the grace and the good will come not through the sign as through a medium, but straight from God to the man who took God at His word. The rite came not between the man and his accepting Lord, but as it were was present at the side to assure him with a physical concurrent fact that all was true. "Nothing between" was the law of the great transaction; nothing, not even a God-given ordinance; nothing but the empty arms receiving the Lord Himself;—and empty arms indeed put "nothing between."

"*The Epistle to the Romans.*"

# THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

"*And lo, I am with you all the days* (so literally), *even unto the end of the world.*"—St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

ALL the days"; every day; therefore *to-day.* "With you;" therefore *with us now.* The Lord Jesus witnesses here to Himself as the ever-present Saviour, not only living, but ever present.

There is something every day for Christians to do in this world for Jesus Christ, by way of a living witness for Him. And the preparation for this, every day, is to recall, to believe, and to use, the fact that He, every day, is with us.

"All the days"; what does this not include? It includes all the wear and tear of life, all the crossings of our will, all the trials of our temper, which common things must bring. "To-day," conceivably, we may have no word to say for Him; but if we realize that He is with us, "just for to-day," then, whether we speak or not, we shall somehow witness for Him by what we are. *Notes of a Sermon.*

# The Second Sunday after Christmas

*"If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"*
—St. John xxi. 22.

In these words note two points. First, "*If I will.*" Here the Lord Jesus speaks as the sovereign Possessor of His servants. Are you His servants? Then remember what this implies. Count the cost—a cost which enfolds a boundless gain. Christ is the Master of your soul, your lips, your time, your thoughts, your ambition; to be His servant means, on His side, an absolute ownership.

Think of those two men, Peter and John; think of them simply as individuals, personalities, made in God's image, new-made by God's dear Son. Well, Jesus Christ claims to rule them absolutely, as their Possessor; "I am about to deal with you, Peter, and with you, John, concerning the date and the manner of your lives and of your deaths, exactly as I please."

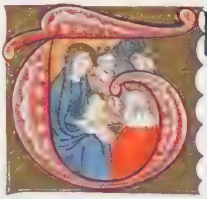
Come to Him, and you will find, as Magdalene did, the tenderest of friends; you will find a kind Companion on the road, as the travellers to Emmaus did; you will find strength and power for every day, in your life and labour for Him; for He is your very life. But all this must be bound together and made strong by that one word, "Master"; by the fact that *He possesses* you, always and in everything.

Then secondly, the Lord here witnesses to Himself as the *coming* Saviour; "If I will that He tarry *till I come*." Here is His own implied promise that He is coming again. Does He seem to linger long? To Him a thousand years are as one day; and when we see what the delay has meant, we shall see that the time was rightly apportioned, and ah, how short it then will prove to be compared with the eternal Sequel! I am no prophet; but it seems to me to grow ever more probable that He is indeed coming ere very long. What a prospect for those who have met Him here—on the road, and in the garden, and by the shore! The Risen One made no careless, unconsidered promise when He undertook to come again. So let us cherish that undertaking of His; let us live in the light of that hope. "Yet a little while, and He that will come shall come, and shall not tarry"—"this same Jesus," whom we have seen by faith, to whom we have surrendered, whom we have found true, and who comes at length that we may "enjoy Him fully for ever."

*Notes of a Sermon.*

"A Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Thy people Israel."

*St. Luke ii. 32.*



# The Epiphany

"How fair the feet of the gospellers of peace, of the gospellers of good!" From the viewpoint of heaven, these words assure us, there is nothing on the earth more lovely than the bearing of the name of Jesus Christ into the needing world. The messenger is doing a work full even now of moral glory, and whose eternal issues shall be worthy of "the King in His beauty." It is the continuation of what the King Himself "began to do" when He was His own first Missionary to the world which needed Him so greatly. "Fair," indeed, were His "feet," when He travelled from above to Bethlehem, to gladden with His earliest Epiphany the shepherds from the fields of David and the "star-led chiefs" who found in the cradle their mysterious King. And "fair" those feet were to the last, till the hour when they climbed the mount of Olives, and then ascended the stair of Heaven.

# THE EPIPHANY

*"The Gentiles, once far off, now made nigh."*

—Eph. ii. 11, 13.

LET us first reflect a little upon the splendid close of this paragraph (Eph. ii. 11–22), and then note some of the steps which have led up to it. This order of thought will have its message for us in the end.

What a climax is reached in verse 22! Here is the eternal destiny of the true Church of God. It is not only that it is to be "saved in Christ for ever," ineffable as is the wonder of that fact. It is not only that it is "to enjoy God fully for ever," though that amazing prospect is so amply and definitely revealed. It is—to be a "holy Sanctuary," a Shrine, a divine Presence-chamber; "a permanent Habitation of God." In measure, the wonderful fact has already begun to be; already He "dwells in" His people, "and walks in them" (see 2 Cor. vi. 16); already the eternal Son resides in the very heart of the true member of the Church, by faith. But a yet greater time is coming, when

the everlasting Father will perfectly reveal Himself to all the watchers of all the regions of the eternal world, not anyhow but *thus*—in His glorified Church, in the Race, the Nature, once wrecked and ruined, but rebuilt into this splendour by His grace. In the Church of the Firstborn, in the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, the blessed Universe shall see for ever God present, God resident. A transfigured Creation shall be His temple-courts: a beatified human Church shall be His sanctuary. That sanctuary shall reflect without a flaw its Indweller's glory: our union and communion with Him shall be, in other words, perfect, absolute, ideal. And the crowning thought, for the soul which loves God, is this, that we shall be His Abode: He shall somehow find His Home, His Shrine, His Throne, in our happy congregated being.

"It doth not yet appear," no, not yet. It is coming. Every evangelization, every conversion, every spiritual union and combination now, is a contribution to that result. It is coming. But what will it be when it is come? Then at length the desire of God will be fulfilled, and His eternal joy will be felt through all the once "groaning and travailing creation."

Now let us recall what the paragraph presents to us as some of the steps of truth leading up to this climax of blessing.

First, we reverently remark the uncompromising remembrance, over again, of the *mercy* of salvation. The Apostle cannot let the Ephesians forget the past, lest they mistake the blissful present. He is indeed in the act of reminding them that they have been brought not only into a place of mercy but into all the wealth of covenanted privilege. They are incorporated, out and out, into the true Israel of all the promises; no mere resident aliens, lodged in the suburbs of the holy Zion, but full citizens of the place, aye, members of the royal family of its King. They are "one body" with patriarchs, and prophets, and high-priests, and psalmists, and with the apostles of the Lamb; they cannot be nearer to God, for they are in His Christ. But then, all this is emphatically, and in their case even eminently, a gift of mere original mercy. They were outsiders once. They had not the slightest claim upon salvation. Not only as they were men, fallen and sinful, but also as they were "Gentiles," they stood upon ground where redemption found them outcast and outlawed. Sovereign mercy (it was such, of course) had given Israel long ago a standing in a place of light, hope, and promise; but *they* were not there. And who should dare to say that the Eternal would have been unrighteous had He left them where they were, "dead" as they were "in trespasses and sins."

at "enmity" with infinite Holiness? It was mercy from first to last; they must remember this, step by step, as they ascend, in their new life, from strength to strength, from grace to glory. It must be reiterated to them, now in this form of thought, now in that, "lest they forget"; lest their Christian life fatally degenerate by an oblivion of what went before.

"*Ephesian Studies.*"

# THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

*"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*—Rom. xii. 1–5.

THE Epistle for the day lies here before us, full all along of that deep characteristic of Gospel life, surrender for service. The call is to a profoundly passive inward attitude, with an express view to a richly active outward usefulness. Possessed, and knowing it, of the compassions of God, the man is asked to give himself over to Eternal Love for purposes of unworldly and unambitious employment in the path chosen for him, whatever it may be. In this respect above all others he is to be "*not conformed to this world*"—that is, he is to make not himself, but his Lord, his pleasure and ambition. "*By the renewal of his mind*" he is to view the Will of God from a point inaccessible to the unregenerate, to the unjustified, to the man not

emancipated in Christ from the tyranny of sin. He is to see in it his inexhaustible interest, his line of quest and hope, his ultimate and satisfying aim; because of the practical identity of that Will and the infinitely good and blessed Bearer of it. And this more than surrender of his faculties, this happy and reposeful consecration of them, is to show its reality in one way above all others first; in a humble estimate of self as compared with brother Christians, and a watchful willingness to do—not another's work, but the duty that lies next for the man himself.

This relative aspect of the life of self-surrender is the burden of this great paragraph of duty. The man rich in Christ is reverently to remember others, and God's will in them, and for them. He is to avoid the subtle temptation to intrude beyond the Master's allotted work *for him*. He is to be slow to think, "I am richly qualified, and could do this thing, and that, and the other, better than the man who does it now." He works as one who has not to contrive a life as full of success and influence as he can imagine, but to accept a life assigned by the Lord who has first given to him Himself.

The passage itself amply implies that he is to use actively and honestly his renewed *intelligence*. He is to look circumstances and conditions in the face, remembering that in one way or another the will of God

is expressed in them. He is to seek to understand not his duties only but his personal equipments for them, natural as well as spiritual. But he is to do this as one whose "mind" is "renewed" by his living contact and union with his redeeming King, and who has really laid his faculties at the feet of an absolute Master, who is the Lord of order as well as of power.

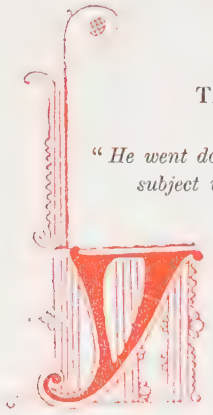
What peace, energy, and dignity comes into a life which is consciously and deliberately thus surrendered! The highest range of duties, as man counts highest, is thus disburthened both of its heavy anxieties and of its temptations to a ruinous self-importance. And the lowest range, as man counts lowest, is filled with the quiet greatness born of the presence and the will of God.

"*The Epistle to the Romans.*"

# THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

## THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST

"*He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.*"—St. Luke iii. 51.



ES, in the first radiance of His youth, from the glories of the Temple, from amidst a circle of astonished and admiring magnates of the elder Church, "He went down with them," with the Galilean workman and his wife; "and He came to Nazareth," and to all that Nazareth contained which was repugnant to His blessed soul; "and He was subject unto them," obedient, dutiful, submissive to the household rules, respectful to the parental will, keeping every hour the whole spirit and the whole letter of the Fifth Commandment.

Is not this "the example," indeed, "of His patience," the mysterious reality of His path of personal duty? He was on His way to redeem a world, to seek the lost, to offer the one last Sacrifice, to rise conquering

from the dead, to sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. How did He set about it? By pleasing not Himself; by taking up duty, the duty just at His feet, and doing that. Though He was the everlasting Son, "yet learned He," yet experienced He, "*obedience*."

Brethren, if we are Christ's, if we are indeed of that new race, those "many brethren," among whom He is Firstborn, His Father has great things in store for us. If we are His, we are on our way to all the greatness and all the capacities of life eternal. What shall we do then, what shall we be? Shall we fret under the yoke of discipline, and resent the task of taking patient heed unto ourselves? Shall we ignore the spiritual import of a common day, as if it could bear no connexion with the things beyond the veil?

Not so. We will look upon our Master. We will adore the example of His patience; the endurance shown in His great pilgrimage; the discipline He passed through on that path which led Him, in His Manhood, to the Throne. And there we will renew the will, and learn the way, to submit to His incessant call to us to take heed unto ourselves, and to find in this, through the maze of life, a clue whose other end we know is fastened to the gate of glory.

"*Fordington Sermons.*"

# THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

*"Jesus . . . manifested forth His glory."*—St. John ii. 11.

THE miracle at Cana forms the Gospel for this Sunday. You will see without difficulty *why* it has been chosen. This is the season of the Epiphany—that is, as the word signifies, of the Manifestation, the making plain, of the Lord Jesus the Saviour. And St. John tells us that this miracle at Cana was, in a very special way, an occasion on which Jesus manifested, epiphanized, made plain, His glory.

"His glory." What a rich and magnificent word that is—Glory! Visions of light and majesty break on us as we use it. We think of Him who dwelleth in the light no man can approach unto. We remember Him, even Christ Jesus Himself, who appeared in Patmos in glory; "His eyes like fire, His face like the sun in his strength." We recall how Stephen looked through the heavens, and saw glory there—

the glory of God, and Jesus at the right hand of God. We hear the Saviour saying, in His own high-priestly prayer, "Glorify thou Me with the glory I had beside Thee ere the world was." We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews that this same mighty Son of God is "the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His Person." We remember His own promise that He will come again in glory—the glory of His Father, and of the angels, and His own. Views, and memories, and hopes, of power, and splendour, and royal and divine dignity, gather round the word glory.

But there was little of all this at Cana. We read of no blaze of light round the Lord's body. He sat there on no throne. His voice there was not as the sound of many waters. His enemies were not made His footstool there, as they shall be hereafter. None of the marriage guests fell at His feet, entranced with His overwhelming greatness. No; He was there as Man with men, a Guest with guests, a Friend with friends. He put forth His power gently, and in silence. And He used it to supply a family want, and to help a household difficulty.

Thus did He "manifest His glory" in that mighty but gentle act of care and love.

Glory indeed it was—the glory of the Son of God, the only begotten Son, the loving and beloved Son

made man; the glory of Him who was so mighty, so divine, that He had time and range *at once* for the Creator's power and the Creator's tenderness; for the greatest and for the least. It was the glory of the eternal Shepherd's unsleeping care for the least and feeblest of His flock.

My brethren, let us fix it in our very souls that "this same Jesus" is the same in His glory now; the same yesterday and to-day.

He is a living Person now. We see Him not; we cannot hear His blessed voice; but oh, He liveth! Surely as He died and rose, He liveth; He liveth in the power of an endless life, an endless love, an unwearied grace and care. He is the same in His nature and character as God; "God over all, blessed for ever." He is the same in His nature and character as Man; able to save to the uttermost, able for ever to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Then, if He is such, let us use Him. Let us pray that not only may His precious blood be not in vain for us; not only that, through a simple and adoring faith, we may be safe for ever from wrath through Him —but that His present life may not be in vain for us; that having such a living Lord Jesus we may deal with Him, commune with Him, cast our care on Him, allay our griefs in Him, commit our way to Him. Let us be very sure that to Him, this Lord of Cana, we may

confide our humblest, our smallest needs. Nothing is too common, too little, to tell to Him, just because he is both true Man and Eternal God.

Tears in secret—sighs over precious memories known only to ourselves — thoughts of love and longing, wakened by some simplest thing, yet stirring and shaking our inmost being — fears and anxieties over which the world's movement passes as with iron force and a leaden weight—these things are not nothing to the Lord of Glory. He, mightier than the world, cares and loves. He who bore the sins of sinners —yes, He too bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows!

Come, then, to this wonderful Consoler. Come, to see for yourselves the manifestation of His glory as the Shepherd, as the Friend. Find Him as the Saviour, and you will find Him *also* as the Consolation. Accept Him because you are a sinner, and you will soon bless Him also in regard of your being a sufferer too.

And at last you will see Him as He is; you will behold His glory, at His own table, at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

It will be the glory of the manifested presence, the unclouded face, the everlasting consolations, of the Friend who loved you and gave Himself for you.

"*Fordington Sermons.*"

# THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

*"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."*
—Rom. xii. 21.

BE *not thou conquered by the evil, but conquer, in the good, the evil.*" Such is the closer rendering of the Greek. "*In* the good"; as if surrounded by it, moving invulnerable, in its magic circle, through "the contradiction of sinners," "the provoking of all men." The thought is just that of Ps. xxxi. 18, 19: "How great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of men; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." "The good" of this sentence of St. Paul's is no vague and abstract thing; it is "the gift of God" (vi. 28); it is the life eternal found and possessed in union with

Christ, our Righteousness, our Sanctification, our Redemption. Practically, it is "not It, but *He*." The Roman convert who should find it more than possible to meet his enemy with love, to do him positive good in his need, with a conquering simplicity of intention, was to do so not so much by an internal conflict between his "better self" and his worse, as by the living power of Christ received in his whole being; by "abiding in Him."

It is so now, and for ever. The open secret of divine peace and love is what it was; as necessary, as versatile, as victorious. And its path of victory is as straight and as sure as of old. And the precept to tread that path, daily and hourly, if occasion calls, is still as divinely binding as it ever was for the Christian, if indeed he has embraced "the mercies of God," and is looking to his Lord to be evermore "transfigured, by the renewing of his mind."

As we review this rich field of the flowers, and of the gold, of holiness, this paragraph (ver. 8–21) of epigrammatic precepts, some leading and pervading principles emerge. We see first that the sanctity of the Gospel is no hushed and cloistered "indifferentism." It is a thing intended for the open field of human life; to be lived out "before the sons of men." A strong positive element is in it. The saint is to "*abominate* the evil"; not only to deprecate it, and deplore. He

is to be energetically "in earnest." He is to "glow" with the Spirit, and to "rejoice" in the hope of glory. He is to take practical, provident means to live not only aright, but manifestly aright, in ways which "all men" can recognize. Again, his life is to be essentially social. He is contemplated as one who meets other lives at every turn, and he is never to forget nor neglect his relation to them. Particularly in the Christian Society, he is to cherish the "family affection of the Gospel"; to defer to fellow-Christians in a generous humility; to share his means with the poor among them; to welcome the strangers of them to his house. He is to think it a sacred duty to enter into the joys and sorrows round him. He is to keep his sympathies open for despised people, and for little matters. Then again, and most prominently after all, he is to be ready to suffer, and to meet suffering with a spirit far greater than that of only resignation. He is to bless his persecutor; he is to serve his enemy in ways most practical and active; he is to conquer him for Christ, in the power of a divine communion.

Then, meanwhile, the life, so positive, so active in its effects, is to be essentially all the while a passive, bearing, enduring life. Its strength is to spring not from the energies of nature, which may or may not be vigorous in the man, but from an internal surrender to the claim and government of his Lord. He has

"presented himself to God" (vi. 13); he has "presented his body, a living sacrifice" (xii. 1). He has recognized, with a penitent wonder and joy, that he is but the limb of a Body, and that his Head is the Lord. His thought is now not for his personal rights, his individual exaltation, but for the glory of his Head, for the fulfilment of the thought of his Head, and for the health and wealth of the Body, as the great vehicle in the world of the gracious will of the Head.

Everywhere the Gospel bids the Christian take sides against himself. He is to stand ready to forego even his surest rights, if only *he* is hurt by so doing; while on the other hand he is to be watchful to respect even the least obvious rights of others, yea, to consider their weaknesses and their prejudices to the furthest just limit. He is "not to resist evil"; in the sense of never fighting for self as self. He is rather to "suffer himself to be defrauded" (1 Cor. vi. 7) than to bring discredit on his Lord in however due a course of law. The straits and humiliations of his earthly lot, if such things are the will of God for him, are not to be materials for his discontent, or occasions for his envy, or for his secular ambition. They are to be his opportunities for inward triumph; the theme of a "song of the Lord," in which he is to sing of strength perfected in weakness, of a power not his own "overshadowing" him (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

Such is the passivity of the saints, deep beneath their serviceable activity. The two are in vital connexion. The root is not the accident but the proper antecedent of the product. For the secret and unostentatious surrender of the will, in its Christian sense, is no mere evacuation, leaving the house swept but empty; it is the reception of the Lord of life into the open castle of the City of Mansoul. It is the placing in His hands of all that the walls contain. And placed in His hands, the castle and the city will shew at once, and continually more and more, that not only order but life has taken possession. The surrender of the Moslem is, in its theory, a *mere* submission. The surrender of the Gospel is a reception also; and thus its nature is to come out in "the fruit of the Spirit."

"*The Epistle to the Romans.*"

# THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

*"This is the covenant which I will make with them, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them; and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more."*—HEB. x. 16, 17.

A COVENANT; the word has a certain strictness and fixity about it. It betokens clear understandings and legal settlements. It is not an "emotional" word. But for its particular purposes it is far better than the expression of the warmest emotions. A deed of gift, in the driest terms of law, is far more effective as an assurance of possession than the most affectionate private letter could be.

Now, God has deigned to put Himself, in this matter, into the position of man. He has entered with us into covenant. He has (Heb. vi. 18) confirmed His word by an oath. What? Is His promise not enough? No, not for the assurance of our fears. He who infinitely understands the hearts of men condescends to come down to our level. He does

not demand of you, barely and sternly, that you should believe because of His *Word* only; He gives oath and a *Covenant;* He bids you read His will to bless through the fixity and formality of a Covenant; He asks you to lie down, with all the weight of your misgivings, upon the immovable rock of His Covenant. "For the mountains shall depart, but the covenant of my peace shall not be removed."

Let us prize the word Covenant, then. Let us love its very legality and formality. For all this says that our God has taken care of the fact of our doubts and fears, and has therefore cast into the strongest possible terms of compact His offers of peace, and holiness, and heaven.

This great Covenant of grace was first explicitly revealed through Jeremiah (xxxi. 31), the passage quoted in our text above. And the Lord Jesus, at the Last Supper, took up those words, and linked them with the sacred Cup, of which He said, as He gave it, "This cup is the new covenant, in my blood." There, sealed with the blessed blood of the Lamb, represented to faith by the holy wine, we see the Covenant, in its two great articles.

The first article, in the order of thought, is *Forgiveness*, free and full, for His name's sake: "Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

The other article is *Holiness*. It is the writing,

by the Lord's own hand, of His law in the heart, and the putting it into the mind. It is not I who am asked, with my trembling hand, to write this new inscription, to reform my will, my mind, my soul. God takes the pen: "*I* will write," not upon the rocks of Sinai, but "on the fleshy tablets of the heart." Yes, it is God the Spirit's work. And how? By applying Christ in His grace and glory to the soul. By making our union with the Lord a living, bright communion every hour. By "bringing every thought" into delightful "captivity," deep but willing, to Christ.

The Lord Himself *undertakes* to do it; and He puts Himself under covenant to fulfil the word. It is no matter of peradventure. Remember, O man, who hast entered into Jesus Christ, that among thy possessions there lies this divine certainty—He will write His laws in thy heart and lodge them in thy mind. In other words, He will touch thee and tune thee into a harmony of will with Him. Leave Him to do *the writing;* do thou *the reading* of the Will of God, transcribed from His Word upon thy own regenerate soul.

The renewed will, the power *through* Christ to walk *with* Christ—these things are pledged to us under covenant. We are to act as knowing that it is so. We are to step out upon our daily walk

looking to Him to fulfil His word of covenant, inscribing His will on ours.

I have already spoken of the double nature of the Covenant promise. There remains the singleness of the Person of the Surety. Its security is lodged in Him, not in you or me. Its certainty is in Him. The Covenant of works, the compact of Creator with creature in the mysterious Garden, was lodged with a Covenant Head who could fail, and who did fail. The twin promises of remission and of purity are lodged both in one Covenant Head likewise, who has overcome for us for ever. Yes, both are in His hands; not remission in His gift and purity in our winning. Both are in Him. He is the perfect sacrifice for sin. He also is the perfect treasury of holiness. In Him is stored up, as it were, the new nature of regenerate man; and regenerate man enjoys the Covenant benefits in Christ, as if he had done the whole law himself. From that treasury man may draw unceasingly, grace for grace, the needed gift for every hour. To Him, then, let us go. Rather, in Him let us dwell, from Him drawing—not as from a distance, but as from the well in the courtyard of our own dwelling-place—alike the peace of perpetual remission and the spring of unfailing power.

"Consider Him," believing man. Take up, weigh,

count over, your treasures in Him. Get acquainted with the depth and height of what is meant by HIM, by Christ Jesus, our Head, our Brother, our Bridegroom, our Surety for evermore.

It is the season of the Epiphany, of the Manifestation of Christ. Shall it be true to its name to us? Follow the star of the Word to the blessed Bethlethem of a deeper manifestation of the Lord; trace the path thither, fenced and guarded by the Covenant ordered in all things and sure; and rest, and worship, and live, and serve, in the peace and strength of covenanted grace.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

*"Put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*

*"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, a heart of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering."*—Col. iii. 8, 12.

SHALL we, my reader and myself, deliberately remember that *imperative* of the Apostle, "*put off*," and the things which it includes? We have here before us, not sins of the scandalous order, as it is supposed specially to be. We are concerned only with the facile transgressions of the temper, and of the tongue; anger, wrath, malice, railing, and talk that is not quite clean, and that is not quite true. Take this to heart, Christian man or woman, professing to "live godly" in common life in the modern world. The precepts given here lay hands on a great many things tolerated all too easily at the dinner-tables, and in the drawing-rooms, and at the holiday resorts, of such as we are

supposed to be. Our offences may not perhaps look great in point of scale. We may not be violently passionate, or positively abusive and indecorous in speech, nor may we be of those who deliberately "love and make a lie." But do we not too easily let ourselves sin on a moderate scale in things which are just the same in kind? We are irritable; we carry about a cherished grudge; we speak harsh words of the absent, when no good purpose whatever underlies the speaking; we needlessly allude to sin; we trifle with truth and manipulate it, when to do so will save us a little trouble. And all these things are identical in kind with the worst bursts of anger, or the most cruel objurgations, or the openly unclean word, or the gravest falsehoods. They lie on the same inclined plane, away from the love of God, and towards the outer darkness. Then we will take no half measures with them. We will "put them away," just as we would put away a filthy garment which it would be misery to wear for another quarter of an hour.

And what will be our motive and our power for doing so with such pollutions? Alas, in our own name and strength the effort will be vain. To the repressive exertions of self, the sins of self are like the shirt of Nessus upon the tortured and helpless Hercules. The very struggle, when conscience goads the unregenerate will, may even develop the *virus*

of the habit. But the Apostle knows a better way. He gives the Colossians a command, but he supports it and makes it possible by a divine fact. He reminds them that *as a fact* they have passed from death unto life, and have exchanged condemnation and bondage in Adam for the pardon and the power which are in Christ. Whether they are subjectively "feeling it" or no, *this is* the objective fact and law of their position and of their condition; they are in Christ, and Christ is in them. And their brother-Christians are in Christ, and Christ is in every one of them. Let them recollect their own life in Him, and His in them, and they will bring in an invincible force against their sins. And let them recollect the life of their brethren in Him, and His in them, and they will need little else to teach them the lesson of unselfish love.

But now he passes into further details in the same line. And his tone is now positive. We have thought thus far mainly of "putting off." It is well, it is vital, to do so. But it is not enough; it is to be done only in order to "putting on."

*Put on therefore*, clothing yourselves anew, *as God's chosen ones*, "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," on purpose to be like Him, *holy*, dedicated by that sovereign choice to Him, *and having His love set upon you*, in that

sublime original exercise of it; put on, I say, as your "beautiful garments," *a heart of compassion*, sympathies ready and open, *sweetness* of temper and bearing, *humble-mindedness*, the attitude of a soul "which has lost its pride in discovering the mercy of its salvation," *meekness* in submission under pain and trial, *longsuffering*, the spirit which will not be tired of pardoning, hoping, loving; *bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if* (the "if" puts, as it were reluctantly, a case just supposable) *any one has a grievance against any one*—for you are all erring sinners still, and *may* give each other occasion for such victories of good over evil. *Just as the Lord* (so read, probably; not "God"), the eternal Saviour and Master, with His infinite rights, *did forgive you*, as you rejoice to know He did, *so do you too;* using your assurance of pardon, your undoubting certainty that "your sins *are* forgiven you for His Name's sake," not for indolence and slumber, but for the glad activities of a self-forgetting kindness. *But over all these things*, as it were the girdle upon and around all these graces, bracing them into one, *put on love, which is the bond of perfectness;* for it makes and it maintains, as no other power can do, the "perfectness," the wholeness, the sweet ripeness, of the Christian character, whether in the man or in the company. "Seeking

its joy in the felicity of others," it must be so, it will be so. *And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts;* let every inward debate between self and God, between self and others, be ruled and guided by the deep consciousness that in Christ you are indeed at rest; let the plea for self-assertion be ever met and negatived by the decision of that *umpire* in favour of love. For that "peace of Christ" is given you, not for yourselves only as individuals, but for the community; *into it you were in fact called*, at your conversion, *in one body;* you were brought one by one under its gentle power, as those who were now to be one with one another in a society whose inmost law should thus be holy peace. *And be ye, become ye*, more and more, *thankful;* prompt to see your mercies, and to praise the Giver—sure and blessed secret for a tone of loving and generous sympathy towards all.

"*Colossian Studies.*"

# THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

*"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me with glory."*—PSALM lxxiii. 24.

SUCH was the hope of Asaph, such the repose of his thoughts, such the strength of his heart, when he issued out of his fierce, dark conflict with perplexity and doubt.

Listen to this praying, conquering saint. Watch him as he flies to the very God whose providence had so distressed him. Mark his two certainties about that God. And make those two certainties, O believer, your very own.

i. "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel." Here is his certainty about God, and his happy resolve for himself, for *this present time*. His certainty about God: "Thou shalt guide me." Yes, he is sure of this. This invisible Eternal, with this intricate Universe on His hands, will yet, with those hands, be quite ready and quite sure to *guide me*.

He will think upon me. He will count my hairs. He will know my soul. He will minutely arrange my circumstances, my duties, my path. And again, here is Asaph's happy resolve about himself: I will let the Lord do it. I will trust Him to do it. Does He offer to guide me? He shall guide me indeed. Does He offer His counsel, His advice, to me? Does He whisper, "This is the way," when I turn to the right hand in self-will, or to the left hand in self-indulgence? *Does* He offer me His counsel? Then indeed I will take it. I will not verify the proverb, in my dealings with HIM, "That the easiest thing is to give counsel, the hardest is to take it." I will take it, and be glad. I will dare to submit myself under His hand; I will dare to be lifted on by His hand; because it is His hand. I will take His advice, despite all seeming reasons against it, because the tender voice, the faithful voice, is His.

There will be no peace, in your inmost relations with God, without this willingness to be guided. But there will be, *with* it. Oh, confide in Him indeed. Make quite sure that He never willingly gives one *unwelcome* counsel to His listening people.

True willingness to do His will He often meets and crowns with most beautiful proofs of His divine willingness to do the will of His saints, where it is

for their good indeed. How profound is the significance of those words, "Delight thyself *in the Lord*, He shall give thee the desires of *thy heart*"! But, however, trust the counsel. Confide your way to Him. Unreservedly ask Him advice about the next thing, and the next. Not like the elders in Ezekiel (ch. xx.), who went to ask counsel through the prophet, but kept their heart-idols standing safe upon the inward throne. Go in sincerity to ask, and to take, His counsel; and indeed you shall find that saying true: "My words do good to him that walketh uprightly."

ii. "Afterward Thou shalt receive me to glory." Here, let us not doubt it, Asaph looks up and on to an everlasting home with God, after a path of guidance by God. I know what doubts and questions are raised about this view. Men have discussed anxiously how much the old saints knew of the hope of glory. But here *is* the hope of glory. The whole Psalm implies it. Asaph bases his comfort about God's mysterious ways very much on just this, that *the end* of the ungodly is darkness, and *the end* of the righteous is light. And anywise for us, us who read this inspired saint's words now, those words are steeped and glorified in the Gospel. Jesus and the Resurrection are designed, for us, to shine on the Psalms, and to shine from them. Whatever Asaph

*thought*, this is what the inspiring Spirit *meant;* Jesus and Heaven.

Such then is the trustful, obedient pilgrim's end, his endless end. The Counsellor, the Adviser, here—the Eternal Friend who often here had to check wandering, and disappoint mistaken wishes, and cross ill-laid schemes—will there, after His discipline, throw off the reserve no longer needed, and become, in all the deep sunshine of eternal happiness, the glorifier of the soul that has followed His counsel.

"He hath, after ye have suffered awhile, called you to His eternal glory" (1 Pet. v. 10). "Afterward," blessed word, "afterward Thou shalt receive me with glory."

"Thou shalt *receive* me." "Thou shalt *take* me," as Asaph's Hebrew simply runs. "Thou shalt guide me, then Thou shalt take me! The closing act of Thy guidance shall be, not to leave me at the gate, but to take me at it. The result of the process will be, to pass into an unutterable nearness to Thee. The voice behind me will become the smile, the welcoming countenance, before me. So shall I be for ever with the Lord. Where Thou art, there shall Thy follower be; for Thou wilt come and take me to Thyself."

"Thou will receive me *with glory*." Yes, not with peace only, though it will be with peace; not with rescue or relief only; not with pardon and

legal security only. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." "The salvation which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. ii. 10) is, in its very essence, "with eternal glory."

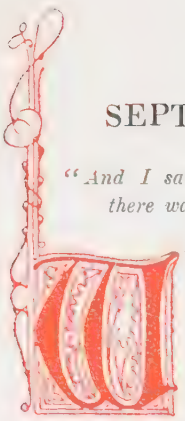
The "patient continuance in well doing," the following on and on, listening to God's advice, doing the next thing which He recommends to be done, is to be followed, as the bud is followed by the flower, by "glory, honour, immortality." Yes, bear it well in mind.

The path of His counsel alone leads to the exaltations of His glory, but it *does* lead thither, and it leads to nothing less.

"*Fordington Sermons.*"

## SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

*"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . and there was no more sea."*—Rev. xxi. 1.



ITH this verse begins the closing passage of the Book of God; the revelation of the things beyond the end. The long history of sin, and trial, and of the strivings of grace with evil, is over at last; and the last partition has taken place. The light has cast out the darkness for ever. The tares are for ever gathered out from among the wheat; the impenitent are severed from among the just; the judgement has been set, and the judgement is done, for ever. Now the veil lifts for the last time; and behold, the New Universe. He who in the beginning created the heaven and the earth now reveals, to the gaze of faith, His second and final world. Behold, He makes all things new; new heavens, new earth, a new Jerusalem, the nations of the new birth dwelling there, the new song going up for ever before the everlasting Presence.

The whole language refers to a state of which we are absolutely without experience. It tries to break up, and to bring down within our reach, in words that picture to us things that we can understand, some fragments of the eternal future; but, as we read, we see proof upon proof that the main use of the words is to suggest things spiritual and divine. The "City" is called, in the same breath, the "Lamb's wife." Its very shape is mystical, not literal; for it is represented as fifteen hundred miles broad, and long, and *high*. And the sunlight over the whole is no material splendour; "the Lord God giveth them light; the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." So with our text; "And there was no more sea." It is plain that the main purpose of the phrase is spiritual. We are to put before us, as we read, a state not so much in which we shall never look out on a waste of tossing waters, in which "no galley with oars nor gallant ship shall pass," in which no drowning victims shall plunge into the black depth, no whirlpool suck down its prey, no rocks tear the wreck to pieces; as a state in which the *sea of the soul* shall be for ever gone; in which none of those evils of which the great waters are the parable *to the soul* shall be heard of or remembered any more.

There shall be a *new Heaven* there; a new and

eternal sky, with its radiance and its breathing airs—even the presence and the vision of the King. There for ever, in that infinitely invigorating atmosphere, the soul of each glorified saint and the whole vast host of souls together shall live, and move, and feel, and exercise a force, an energy, of power and interest, to which the intensest moments of mortal will and power are but as living death. And there shall be *a new Earth* there. Man, in his full and final reality, man in his individual life, man in the countless interests and exercises of his congregated life, shall be there beneath that sky of the Eternal Presence, and breathing that air of the Eternal Love.

But "there shall be no more sea." No *local* parting is there; "where they are gone, adieux and farewells are a sound unknown." No grave is dug there; no death-bed is wept over there; no waving farewells over the dividing waters are seen there. And no *moral* parting is there; no misunderstanding, no jealousy, no pride, no wrath, no self-seeking, can there for one moment part the sympathies of the children of immortality. There, heart with heart will make as it were one bright, beautiful, continuous continent of sympathy and mutual joy. "*Together—for ever—with the Lord.*"

The New Universe will come. All these things

shall be dissolved. He who created can uncreate the material things around us that seem so lasting. One word, one act of will of His all-wise omnipotence, and the present frame of things would not so much break up as cease to be. It exists only because it rests upon His will.

We know from this Scripture what will follow that awful crisis in creation. He who can uncreate will yet create. There shall be a real world, final, and eternal, and blessed, for His redeemed. They that have fled to His refuge here shall dwell in His city there. They that have come to the Lamb's blood of sprinkling now, that have hung their whole hope on the Cross of the Lord Christ Jesus, shall dwell, in real energy and infinite joy, before the Lamb's Throne then. And there, on that new earth, and beneath that new Heaven, there shall be no more sea of agitation, no more sea of separation, through the long, fair eternity.

"*Fordington Sermons.*"

# SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

GEN. i. ii. and iii.

THESE first chapters of Scripture must certainly, if I read them aright, be received by the Christian as records of fact. They are not merely parables, or of the nature of mere imaginative poems, embodying general principles. A parable, like Jotham's, for example, need not be a matter of fact at all. An imaginative poem like *Paradise Lost* makes no pretension to authority on matters of fact. But our Lord Himself appealed to Genesis i. on the law of marriage, and the Apostle appeals to Genesis iii. for the fact of the fall of man. On the other hand these chapters, by the nature of their contents, invite us to interpret their language with a certain reserve as to literalism. They go back to a period antecedent to all human experience; when they do come to the creation of man they depict what is almost equally beyond our understanding, the beginnings of the being of the

very first members of our race, or, to vary the metaphor, not of its members at all but of its head. So viewed, as dealing with facts which are also mysteries, the chapters suggest an element of mystery in their language which would be quite out of place in, for instance, the history of Joseph, or that of the shipwreck of St. Paul. They find an analogy in the two closing chapters of Scripture, with their picture of the new heavens and earth, and of the holy city. There we have indeed facts put before us; a future state of glory, the abode of the saints of God in a blessed eternity of joy and worship. But we do not regard the language of the description as necessarily literal. The street of gold, the gates of pearl, the bright river, the tree of life—we are willing to read these rather as hieroglyphics than as pictures or photographs of scenery. Is not the like the case with Genesis i.–iii.? We are not bound to believe that the Creator literally spoke the syllables, "Let there be light," or "Let us make man." We are not bound to literalism in the mysterious details of the creation of woman. We are not bound, as to an article of faith, to a literal rendering of the details of the temptation. These things are not a parable, for Scripture itself treats them as matters of fact; but they are facts conveyed in hieroglyphic signs. The facts are that

man was so made as to be the personal reflection of the divine Personality; that he was brought into being under conditions which made him purely responsive to the will and voice of God; that an evil power led him, through his senses, to rebel against that will; and that so human nature was defiled. We thus have Scripture beginning and ending with facts so mysterious that they need a mysterious representation. Between those two points we have the history of Redemption, actually worked out on the field of human experience, and therefore capable of a literal narrative. To speak of one important detail. The verses which describe the action of the serpent seem to me a possible case of hieroglyphic. Should I come to know that what actually happened did not involve the use of human words by an animal, I should feel no shock to my faith in the Scriptures, any more than I do when in the Revelation I read of the Church as of a woman pursued by a dragon which pours a river from its mouth. That is a prophecy of fact, conveyed through hieroglyphic symbols; and Gen. iii., as I take it, is of the same class.

Let us approach these mysteries in the spirit of that wise saying, "Never let what you know be disturbed by what you do not know." In this case we know the Christ of the Bible, Son of God and

Son of man. We know that to Him the Bible was authoritative and divine. Let us hold fast those known facts, and let not our repose upon them be disturbed by things unknown, which attend upon the process of the delivery of the message of God in His Word.

*MS. on the Interpretation of Genesis.*

# QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

*"The fruit of the Spirit is love."*—Gal. v. 22.

*"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."*—1 Cor. xiii. 13.

WE come to St. Paul's delineation of this pure and sweet Fruit of the Spirit. Let us take it up for a few very practical enquiries and remarks.

The first point for observation, an obvious one, but none the less to be definitely considered, is that the Fruit of the Spirit consists in its essence not of doing but of being. There is nothing in this description which directly speaks of energetic enterprise, multiplied labours, severe sufferings, great material sacrifices. The activities of life are in fact almost absent from the immediate view, and the passive, the patient, aspect of the spiritual man's contact with life and men is alone very visibly present.

What do we read in this? That the spiritual man is called, as his highest calling, to cut himself off

from active, willing, practical service of others? That the celestial fruit will grow, and ripen, and be ready for the festival of God, most favourably in a "life of contemplation," in a desert, or a cloister, or a jealously isolated study? The whole New Testament negatives such a thought. In it, the ideal Christian life is the life in which the Lord is glorified and manifested amidst the manifold relative duties and labours of the life of home, of citizenship, of public ministry, of active evangelization. It is a life in which the cross is daily carried—the cross not of our wilful and ambitious choosing, but of the Lord's humbling and searching allotment in the daily path. If the life of a monastery were contemplated in the New Testament at all, as it is not, surely it would be presented there as a "counsel" not "of perfection" but of imperfection; a lower path of surrender and of service, while the higher path was that of the mother, the child, the servant, who, in the midst of common life, "did the will of God from the soul" (Eph. vi. 6).

But then, the impartial Gospel does not say that work is therefore life. It points to the eternal necessity of right being in order to right doing. It bids the Christian live to serve, but live *behind his service* in and with his Lord and Life. It asks, ultimately, not whether you give your goods to the poor, or your body to the fire, but whether you love.

So "the Fruit of the Spirit" is a divinely given and developed *character*, drawn out of the fulness of Christ; a character which must express itself in service, but whose essence "is hid with Christ in God." This is the "fruit" which, according to the Lord Jesus Christ's own words, we shall surely bear if by the Spirit "we abide in Him." Of this fruit, says the same Teacher, we are able to bear "much," to the glory of His Father. We may or may not, in His providence, have much to do for Him in enterprise, in effort, in public testimony, in memorable suffering. Perhaps His will for us, as we submit ourselves wholly to it, humbly ready to "toil and not faint" in His name, may be to do the most silent of domestic duties, or to bear the most exhausting weakness or pain in a neglected sick-room. But these questions touch the accidents of the matter, not the essence. The "fruit" is the character derived for us by the Holy Spirit from Jesus Christ our Head. The "much fruit" is that character, not stunted and dwarfed by the frosts of unbelief, but expanding in sweet and strong development in the sunny open air of the simplest faith.

And now we will look at the particulars of the description, at the elements which this inspired analysis show us in the texture of this fruit of Paradise grown on earth.

Those elements are nine: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." And we may, without over-refinement, trace a threefold grouping in the nine. "Love, joy, peace," if I read their reference aright, describe the character in its immediate relation to the Lord, who is its spring of "love," its cause of "joy," its living law of internal "peace." "Longsuffering, gentleness, goodness," describe it in its relations with men, as the Christian comes evermore from the "secret of the Presence" to live his "hidden" life, unharmed and bearing blessing with it, amidst "the plotting of men" and "the strife of tongues." "Faithfulness, meekness, self-control," denote the Christian's characteristics not so much under the trials of opposition or provocation as in the common calls and duties of the day. And so the "fruit" appears in its fair roundness and ripeness. So the man, born of the Spirit, led of the Spirit, taking step by step by the Spirit, filled with this same blessed Spirit, lives, moves, and has his being, with and for God and man. He is one personality, and so his regenerate and Spirit-developed character is one, from the "love" to the "self-control"; from his inmost intercourse with his Lord to his act of most watchful and practical self-discipline in open human life. What he is as indeed a Christian, *in toto*, that is the Spirit's Fruit.

# ASH WEDNESDAY

*"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."*—Rev. ii. 4.

THIS is the first of the seven short letters dictated by the Lord Christ when He appeared in glory to St. John at Patmos. Though primarily addressed to certain believers living at that day, we rightly read them as meant for all Christians of all time, in the ever-recurring words, "Hear what the Spirit saith *unto the churches*." Only one limit to the scope is set; "*He that hath an ear*." Whoever that may be, and wherever, and whenever, the eternal Master has a word for him.

All the seven Letters are framed after the same model. Each contains three recurring features:

i. An utterance concerning Christ Himself, showing forth His glory;

ii. A description of "the works" of the disciples, and particularly of the "Angel," of the place; meaning either the chief pastor, or the church itself, summed up as it were in one. "Works" denote, we find,

not only outer but inner works; what Christians are as much as what they do;

iii. Then, along with encouragement to true disciples, and warning to the unfaithful, comes always a promise—sometimes for earth, more often for Heaven; in most cases a promise of immortality and sinlessness in the eternal home.

Every Epistle begins with telling us that Jesus is about to speak; each ends with telling us that the Holy Spirit has spoken, as if to intimate that the Lord Jesus holds intercourse with us now through the Holy Ghost. All our communion with Him here passes through the Spirit, the abiding Representative of the ascended Saviour.

Now to our letter. It is addressed to "the angel of the church *of Ephesus*"—the same church to which St. Paul wrote, at least primarily, his marvellous Epistle, which indicates that they had reached indeed a height of "joy and peace in believing"; to these same Christians the Lord sends now this later message; "He knows their works," and He gives a graciously bright description of them, in the first place. This "Angel," we find, bore about a working, toiling spirit, full of energy for the Lord, and his Lord loves to praise him. But outward toil in His service can never take the place of inward love. "I have somewhat against thee," He says; and the

"somewhat" makes a stern rebuke. There was something wrong at the root of the Ephesian life. The leaves all look green; the fruit is abundant; but there is a worm at the root:—"*Thou hast left thy first love.*"

Listen, O Christian man, O Christian worker. See the jealousy of thy Lord over the hearts of those who love Him. The heart must go with the hand; the heart must go with the lips; the heart must go with the enterprise and energy. The Angel of Ephesus was immensely diligent, but Jesus Christ was not contented. He was not indifferent to what His servant was doing for Him. He was always with him, and He entered into it all; but He was not contented. "I, thy personal Saviour, am not to thee what I was at first."

Let us learn from this discontent of the Lord Jesus Christ. He never slights dutiful diligence. Duty is the path along which true love must ever run. But the Master does not mistake the way for the wayfarer. Whatever He gives us to do, if indeed He gives it, it is work for Him; it is His sacred will; and we are to be diligent and careful in the doing. But have we reason to believe that He is contented with our doing? Is *mere* duty our ruling motive? Or do we set out each day with the thought, "I love HIM, and I do this for HIM"? He is jealous

over our love, over our first love. Most Christians, probably, know not the day and hour, but many, broadly speaking, know the time, when that first love began. Go back to it sometimes. How did you love Him then? How do you love Him now?

Well, there is comfort to be found in this heart-searching verse. It implies, by the very censure, that the first love *need not go off.* If He says, "I have it against thee that thou hast left thy first love," then clearly, with fidelity to Him, that first love might have been kept. That morning sunshine need never have grown dim. There need be no afternoon and evening to that light. It is intended to grow brighter and yet brighter, fresher and fairer, to the last. And this verse is an assurance that He, the Cause and Source of love, can keep this light of love always high and always clear.

Is it thus with you now? If it is, be filled with thankful joy; but be not satisfied; there is ever more to follow. Let the Lord Jesus be the same to you to-morrow morning that He is to-day, to save and to keep. If you would have the first love ever bright, go ever to Him whom then you found; not to your feeling about Him, but to Him about whom you felt.

But perhaps, looking backwards, you see a woeful change. Do not turn from the view. Do not stifle conscience with the thought, *it must be so.* "Re-

member" and "Repent." "Again transform thy life," He seems to say, "by looking to me again; do the first works, not by slackening in the present task, but by doing it anew in the spirit of the man who has seen, at length, his Lord."

Lastly, we note the Ephesian promise: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." I will at last make him immortal in the life of love. No loss of first joy, and first love, shall ever enter there; there shall be a "blessed necessity" there of always being what we were when we entered—only growing "from glory to glory," in the very presence of the King.

*Notes of an Address.*

# THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

"*Tempted of the devil.*"—St. Matt. iv. 1.

HE narrative of the Temptation of our Saviour must have come in the first instance from Himself alone. We will accept it then with worshipping faith as a record of facts, and then will study the message of the facts to us. We have, then, first the solemn, searching mystery of the allotment of temptation to the Son of God. Even He is not to be exempt. The test of the Father, the allurement of the enemy, must be applied to even Him. The King must needs be tempted; therefore let not His followers complain. But then, blessed be the name of our King, "He is able" now "to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, *for* He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin"; our experience is His; His sympathy, *all the stronger for His sinlessness*, is ours. Then further, we have the fact that the holy Tempted One is assailed by the Tempter, with consummate skill, on the side of His holiness. He is tempted to satisfy His great hunger, not anyhow,

but by an exercise of wonder-power *as an evidence that He is the Son of God.* The enemy's inner aim is to beguile Him out of the attitude of waiting on His Father into the attitude of self-chosen and self-hastened action. But this is veiled, and it is veiled under the invitation to Him to give a miracle-proof of His Sonship. Then again, taking St. Luke's order, He is tempted to leap into universal empire by an act of vassalage to one who assures Him that he is God's delegate in these matters:—"*it is delivered* unto me." This was an allurement addressed to the noblest possible aims and hopes; would it not be an infinite blessing to the kingdoms of the world that He should be their Sovereign, *and at once?* Then, on the "turret" of the Temple, He is invited again to evidence His Sonship, and to do so in connexion with one of the holiest of truths—namely, the willing ministry of angels, guaranteed by a Scripture promise. Were not these attacks skilfully delivered? Did not the Tempter, in a certain sense and within certain limits, know his Object of assault? Enticement from beneath can come to us through things given to us from above. It was so with the divine Sonship and the divine Royalty of the Lord Jesus Christ. Noble natures have vulnerable points in their very nobleness. There is no ultimate safety even in the nobleness; there is none outside the Lord and His Word. And He, *by ex-*

*perience*, understands the danger and the need. Then we have the fact of the Lord's *way to victory*. This is a very wonderful study. The one solitary weapon which He uses, what is it? It is the Written Word. I do not think we can ponder this fact too carefully, especially in our day, when even excellent people are telling us that we have to learn that there are untrustworthy as well as trustworthy parts of Scripture, and that we must somehow distinguish them. It is refreshing and reassuring to turn from such suggestions and listen to the Lord Jesus Christ while He quotes the words of Deuteronomy three solemn times as the sufficient reason for His replies, and does so with the simple formula, "It is written." The Lord met the Tempter with the Scripture as His only sword.

But how was He prepared for the true use of His weapon? By the fulness of the Spirit, and by that great Fast in the desert. "Full of the Holy Ghost, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." The message of this to us—what is it? That for us too, if our Bible is to be assuredly our victory over the Evil Power, it is urgently needful that we so open our spirits to the Eternal Spirit that God shall be in us of a truth, and that this blessed Presence shall be cherished and developed in a life of which the Lord's Fast is the perpetual type, the life of holy watching, and holy self-control.

"*Temptation and Escape.*"

# THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

*"And it came to pass . . . that God did tempt Abraham."*
—GEN. xxii. 1.

ET us take the Temptation of Abraham, given us in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis. "God did tempt Abraham." He "proved" him. We know *how* He proved him. He put a tremendous strain at once on his affections and on his spiritual hopes. Isaac was the tenderly beloved son of his old age. What parent cannot picture the deep fondness of the father's yearning over him? Isaac was rising now into the strength and responsiveness of young manhood; he was beginning to be his father's friend; he was evidently partaker of his father's faith. And, then, Isaac was also the child of the Promise. It was "in Isaac" that Abraham's seed was to be "called." As Isaac's descendants they were to live and prosper as the chosen people. And now Isaac was to be put to death—aye, and by his father's hand!

This narrative has been an awful difficulty to many.

It is said by some that the whole incident must be explained by ideas in Abraham's mind suggested by the practice of human sacrifices around him. It is held that Abraham thought on these, and brooded over them, till the feeling arose that *His* God also must demand nothing short of the life of his best-beloved treasure; and then this feeling mastered him, as a passionate resolve, till he *all but* slew his son.

Such a view I am unable to accept. I am quite sure that it is not the view meant to be given by the narrative, and I am quite sure that the narrative had the approval of that supreme Reader of the Bible, our Lord Jesus Christ, as a true account of His Father's will and work. So I am sure that somehow, divinely, the Lord conveyed to Abraham His command as the absolute Owner of the life of His creatures; that Abraham obeyed not his own feelings, but that command; that he was divinely prevented from doing the final act, when his willingness to do even it at his Lord's word had been shewn; and that his whole conduct received a glorious crown of approval then and there from heaven. All this I steadfastly believe; but I do not wonder at the difficulties which many hearts have felt over this story.

Now, here note some of the messages carried to us by Abraham's temptation.

First, it was obviously a case where "test" and "allurement" might, and no doubt did, beset Abraham at the same time. His heavenly Friend was testing him. His dark enemy is not mentioned: Genesis has no clear reference to the Evil One at all after the third chapter. But we may be sure he was watching his occasion, and would whisper deep into Abraham's soul the thought that, if this call was from God, the Lord was an awfully "austere" Master; would not some other deity, after all, be more kind and tolerant? Should not Abraham turn and serve another God?

Then, further, we see where the essence of the awful test lay. Tempted Abraham was asked, in effect, two questions. He was asked whether he absolutely resigned himself to the Lord's ownership. He was asked also whether he absolutely trusted his Owner's truth and love. The two questions were not identical, but they were twined close together. And the response of Abraham to both questions, by the grace of God in his heart, was a glorious "Yes," an "Amen" which sounds on for ever through all the generations of the followers of the faith of Abraham. He so acted as to say, in effect: "I am Thine, and all mine is Thine, utterly and for ever." And this he did, not as merely submitting in stern silence to the inevitable, but "in faith." He was quite sure

that "He was faithful who had promised" (see Heb. xi. 17–19). He was sure of this because he was sure of His character; because he knew God, and, knowing Him, loved Him. So he overcame; so he received the crown; so he was blessed himself, and became a blessing to the world.

Are we ever "proved" in ways which in the least degree remind us of Abraham upon Moriah? Has something come upon us which seems very strange, very dreadful, very arbitrary, to our poor aching eyes? Let us remember whose we are, and whom, because we know Him, we trust. We belong to Him by purchase, by conquest, by surrender of ourselves. Therefore all our "belongings" belong to Him, in the sense that He has a perfect right to detach them from us if He thinks it well. And we rely on Him to whom we belong. We *know* that not only are His rights absolute, but so also is His love, which abideth, which is indeed *Himself*. And He has promised. And He is "faithful; He cannot deny Himself." So we will, by His grace within us, say "Yes." And so we will stand the test, and so reject the allurement. And, ah, we have not yet "seen the end of the Lord." No, nor shall we ever see it, in all its loving glory, till "we see Him as He is."

"*Temptation and Escape.*"

# THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

*"And He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."*—St. Luke ix. 23.

LET us study these familiar words a little in detail.

i. Observe the universality of reference. "If *any man* wills to come after me; whoever desires to follow my lead; then let this man, be he who he may, do thus: Let him deny himself, and daily take up his cross and follow me. Let any man who wills to follow me, and does not do thus, by no means marvel if his following, such as it is, proves to be a disappointing, a disheartening thing. Let such a one prepare to find my yoke uneasy, and my burden heavy, and my commandments grievous."

ii. Then, "Let him deny *himself*." Always let us emphasize, in thought, and in tone, that last word, "let him deny *himself*." And what is *Self*-denial? The word is often and much mistaken in common use, as if it meant much the same as self-control—the

control of lower elements of our being by higher. If a man postpones the present to the future, resolving on present loss for the sake of future gain, this is often called Self-denial. If a man, for some high object of his own, abjures inferior pleasures, "scorns delights, and lives laborious days," this is often called Self-denial. If, in the highest sphere, for the sake of rest hereafter, he inflicts on himself great unrest now, this too is often called Self-denial.

Now the doing of such things may be wrong or may be right in itself; but it is not self-denial, as the phrase is used here assuredly by our Lord.

In effect, the Lord's precept comes to this—the real displacement of self from the throne of life in its purposes and hopes, and the real enthronement of Another. It comes to—unqualified self-surrender. We all practically understand what we mean when we speak about self and its surrender, and the enthronement of Jesus Christ. We mean that whereas yesterday our aims, many of them, some of them, one of them, terminated in ourself, to-day, so far as we know, they all terminate in our Lord. Yesterday, perhaps in some highly refined mode, perhaps in some mode not refined, we lived at least a part of our life to self; now, in full purpose, we live the whole of it to Him who died for us and rose again.

iii. "And let him take up his cross daily, and

follow me." Every word is pregnant here, the "taking up"—the acceptance by the regenerate will, with a true surrender, of whatever may be meant by the cross. And then, "the cross"! Observe, it is not the yoke, the burthen, but the *cross*—a word of very definite imagery; a thing to be carried indeed, as any burthen is to be carried—but whither, and why? To a Calvary, and because of a crucifixion to be done there. The "self" just "denied," just ignored, rejected, is to be also bound and nailed as to a Roman cross, and this with the consenting act of the regenerate will, which has taken up that cross for that end.

But "*daily*"; without intermission, without holiday; now, to-day, this hour; and then, to-morrow! And the daily "*cross*"; a something which is to be the instrument of disgrace and execution to something else! And what will that something be? Just whatever gives occasion of ever deeper test to the Self-surrender of which we have spoken; just whatever exposes to shame and death the old aims, and purposes, and plans, the old spirit of Self and its life.

iv. "And let him follow me." This may refer especially to the last previous words, the cross-bearing; it may betoken a following of Him who "went out bearing His Cross." But it may better be referred to the whole previous verse, to that mysterious

Self-denial of the Son, whereby, throughout His blessed course, "His meat was to do, not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him," and "to glorify Him upon the earth."

I leave upon the heart, with little attempt at system, just this utterance of the Christian's Master calling His bond-servant out to the path of holiness. Listen, weigh, and apply to the inmost self. Let the cost be counted before the results are claimed. Would you know what it is, in the strong but gentle realities of a happy experience, to be "he that overcometh," to have "heart and thoughts kept by the peace of God"? Then more is needed than even the holiest aspirations. There needs certain definite demands on the regenerate will. You must draw for every victory upon divine resources. But you must do it as one who is, in full heart-purpose, self-surrendered, denying the life of self, and daily taking up the cross.

"*Thoughts on Christian Sanctity.*"

# THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

*"How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"*
—GEN. xxxix. 9.

SO said Joseph, alone with Potiphar's wife. The unhappy woman had been enticing Joseph, then about twenty-seven years old, to gross and grievous sin. Sin had first mastered *her;* she was the insane slave of its power. Now she in turn craved, by a sort of dreadful "law of sin," to drag down another soul with her into the pit.

Joseph was not a glorified spirit. He was a young mortal man, subject to "like passions" to our own. The fiery arrows of the words, actions, looks, of the temptress were aimed upon no statue, no automaton, but upon a being full of the perils of our nature in its glowing prime. Not only so: this young man, this young Oriental man, was placed in circumstances exquisitely difficult for virtue and terribly easy for moral relaxation. Outwardly, there was no call upon him such as the words *noblesse oblige* imply; he was

but a purchased slave. And he was in a country—namely, Egypt—which was infected to an extreme degree by moral pollution; he had breathed for some time the air of its opinion and practice everywhere around him. His home in Canaan had been no perfect home, yet the breath of the Lord and the Promise had been in it. But now here he was, a young man, away from home, awfully far away, helplessly separated from all its helps, including the moral influence of a father who had "seen God face to face," imperfect as his use of that blessing had often been. Moreover, Joseph had been carried off from home by an act of atrocious injustice and cruelty, enough to embitter his spirit for all time. And has my reader ever felt bitterness of spirit? If so, he knows well what a "place" it can "give to the devil." Awful is the tempter's power when he comes with some seduction, and finds that at that moment the spirit is in rebellion under some real injury, angry with man the wrong-doer, and fretting against Him who has permitted the wrong to be done.

We can hardly imagine a position more terribly difficult than that of Joseph, as regarded the open avenues for the temptation. And now, in all its force, the temptation came.

In this case, unlike Abraham's, the temptation is put before us as an allurement from the powers of

darkness. But we saw in Abraham's case how the Enemy must have used *the test* as *a lure*. So here, in a converse way, we may be confident that Joseph's eternal Master and Friend used *the lure* as *a test*, in His divine faithfulness and love. He took the occasion to give Joseph just that victory which is won by tested faith alone. The young man put the sin away at once, in the name and in the power of God, sure that He was real, holy, and at hand. He was instantly conscious of two things—that sin was sin, and that God was near. His moral standard was true. Egypt might condone what it pleased; as for him, this act was a "great wickedness." And the essence of it was that it was "against God." He said nothing of Potiphar's wrath. The all-possessing thought was God. Jacob was far away; but God was there. And how *could* he "sin against God"?

Through Joseph's temptation and his victory over it comes this message, that the Word of God "knows all about" these fierce assaults. And in that one simple reflection lies a help and hope very precious to tempted hearts.

The Book which calls all the Lord's disciples, in sacred earnest, not only to virtue but to holiness, does not underrate the fact and the power of the fiercest and crudest temptations to sin. The Bible "knows all about it." It therefore speaks advisedly when it

speaks of a "more than conquest" as possible all the while.

Joseph's secret of victory was "the practice of the presence of God." We read nothing, all through Joseph's life, about his inner spiritual experience. But this one sentence, spoken in the hour of temptation, is eloquent to tell us what it must have been. He must have "walked with God" in very close and watchful intercourse indeed. Perhaps that awful hour in the dry pit at Dothan was his great crisis, in which he discovered the supreme reality of God for his soul. But however, "God *was* in all his thoughts"—aye, in the Egyptian house, in the daily servile task, and therefore in the fierce temptation. The Enemy assailed him with desperate force. But it was in vain. The chamber was "swept and garnished," but *not empty*. God was at home within.

"*Temptation and Escape.*"

# THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

*"Take heed unto thyself."*—1 Tim. iv. 16.

"WHAT is the chief and highest end of man?" This is the first question in the Scottish Catechism. And no Christian will dispute the truth and grandeur of the answer; "The chief and highest end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him fully for ever." And what, we may go on to ask, is the final requisite to that end? A character in harmony with God, and capable therefore of the heaven of His presence. And what, so far as we are concerned, is the ultimate aim of the divine Gospel? To make that character.

The Cross, trustfully accepted, is indeed the penitent's title, his one title, to eternal life. But the title is not the whole process of salvation. There must be training too. And the grant of the title is thus but a step, though immeasurably important, in the whole process. It lifts away the millstone of condemnation, on purpose, above all things, that the

pardoned may be made effectually willing, with a will disengaged from the fears and the repulsions of the unpardoned state, to be trained into a character in harmony with God, and capable of His heavenly presence.

It is deplorable, because it is so entirely unlike the Bible, to forget the immovable truth that the penitent is accepted, not only that he may be spared the sorrows of a lost eternity, but that he may be brought decisively under training into a character at harmony with God, and capable of the eternity of His heaven. "Being made free from sin," that is to say, from its claim, "and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

It must be then a study of supreme importance to trace in Scripture some of the principles of that process which tends thus to educate the soul that has fled into that refuge which becomes also, instantly, its school.

There is a real risk now, if ever there was, of the cancer-growth of self-indulgence. Too often, amidst this atmosphere, the soul that has grasped personal justification (and thrice happy the soul that has done it) yet forgets to grasp what should be its direct result; no negligent repose in sacred privileges, but the real and glorious work of the will in the strength

of the peace of God. The assured and gladdened disciple very often needs to be reminded that his liberty is a liberty to observe, and love, and do every detail of his Redeemer's will; that in his happy faith he is to find the nerves of an unwearied virtue; that from his whole plan of life down to its *minutiæ* of daily personal habits—public, private, and solitary—aye, down to his sleep, his table, and his dress, he must habituate himself to the moral and spiritual consciousness of being under discipline. For he is being trained, under his Lord's grace and guidance, into *the character* of the Gospel.

Self-discipline is not holiness. You may be profoundly devout, and not know God. You may wear your body to a shadow, and not know God. But the soul that does know God, or rather is known of Him, will seek and will practise reverence most deep and self-discipline most attentive; for they are part of the training, under the grace of God, of that character in which the justified will stand out, at last, the glorified.

The justified Christian who is self-indulgent, who takes not heed to himself, is an anomaly on Gospel principles. I need not explain that I do not mean that the justified are to mask themselves in an artificial sanctimony. They are not to treat human life as an idle dream, for it is their very training-ground.

They are not to be morose and unsympathetic among their neighbours. They are not to suppress all that is warm and radiant in their own circumstances or endowments. No; but they are *to control* themselves in these things, in the light of the will of God. They are expected by the whole Gospel to take heed unto themselves. If, claiming to stand among the justified, they find themselves remiss in common things, lax in personal conduct, unregardful of the claims of others, uncourteous, unthankful, undutiful, let them take heed unto themselves. Precisely because they are justified, they are under training, and strict training. And eternity will bear the imprint of what that training has been for them.

"*Christ is All.*"

"By Thine Agony and bloody Sweat, by Thy Cross and Passion, by Thy precious Death and Burial, Good Lord deliver us."

*Litany.*

## The Sunday next before Easter

HEAVENLY Father, we enter again the Week of the Passion of Thy dear Son our Saviour. Let us follow Him, in the light of Thy Word, to Bethany and to Jerusalem; to the Temple; to the Upper Room; to Gethsemane; to the Cross and to the Grave. By Thy Holy Spirit's teaching and power, let us realize anew the wonder of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that followed, for Him and for His people. Let us hide ourselves again in the smitten Rock of Ages, and take up, with deeper willingness than ever, our cross, daily, to follow Him; and let us with a clearer faith and surer hope than ever anticipate our own passage through the grave and gate of death. So bless us, and bring us to the bright Easter morning with great joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER

*"And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*—PHIL. ii. 11.

SO closes one of the most conspicuous and magnificent of the dogmatic utterances of the New Testament. Let us consider it for a few moments from that point of view alone. We have here a chain of assertions about our Lord Jesus Christ, made within some thirty years of His death at Jerusalem; made in the open day of public Christian intercourse, and made (every reader must feel this) not in the least in the manner of controversy, of assertion against difficulties and denials, but in the tone of a settled, common, and most living certainty.

These assertions give us on the one hand the fullest possible assurance that He is Man, Man in nature, in circumstances and experience, and particularly in the sphere of relation to God the Father.

But they also assure us, in precisely the same tone,

and in a way which is equally vital to the argument in hand, that He is as genuinely Divine as He is genuinely Human. Did He "come to be in Bond-servant's Form"? And does the word "Form" there, unless the glowing argument is to run as cold as ice, mean, as it ought to mean, reality in manifestation, fact in sight, a Manhood perfectly real, carrying with it a veritable creaturely obligation to God? But He was also, antecedently, "in God's Form." And there too, therefore, we are to understand, unless the wonderful words are to be robbed of all their living power, that He who came to be Man, and to seem Man, in an antecedent state of His blessed Being was God, and seemed God. And His "becoming to be" one with us in that mysterious but genuine Bond-service was the free and conscious choice of His eternal Will, His eternal Love, in the glory of the Throne. "When He came on earth abased," He was no victim of a secret and irresistible destiny, such as that which in the Stoic's theology swept the Gods of Olympus to their hour of change and extinction as surely as it swept men to ultimate annihilation. "*He made Himself* void," with all the foresight and with all the freewill which can be exercised upon the Throne where the Son is in the Form of the Eternal Nature. Such is the Christology of the passage in its aspect towards Deity.

Then in regard of our beloved Lord's Manhood, its implications assure us that the perfect genuineness of that Manhood, which could not be expressed in a term more profound and complete than this same "Form of Bondservant," leaves us yet perfectly sure that He who chose to be Bondservant is to us only all the more, even in His Manhood, Lord. Was it not His own prescient choice to be true Man? And was it not His choice with a prescient and infallible regard to "the things of others," to "us men and our salvation"? Then we may be sure that, whatever is meant by the "made Himself void," which here describes His Incarnation, one thing it could never possibly mean—a *Kenôsis* which could hurt or distort His absolute fitness to guide and bless us whom He came to save. That awful and benignant "Exinanition" placed Him indeed on the creaturely level in regard of the reality of human experience of growth, and human capacity for suffering. But never for one moment did it, could it, make Him other than the absolute and infallible Master and Guide of His redeemed.

Now, in closing, let us remember for our blessing how this passage of didactic splendour comes in. It is no lecture in the abstract, it is not in the least a controversial assertion. It is simply part of an argument to the heart. St. Paul is not here, as elsewhere

in his Epistles, combating an error of faith; he is pleading for a life of love.

The passage before us is charged to the brim with the doctrine of the Person and the Natures of Christ. And why? It is in order that the Christian, tempted to a self-asserting life, may "look upon the things of others," for the reason that this supreme Fact, his Saviour, is in fact thus and thus, and did in fact think and act thus and thus for His people.

O reason of reasons, argument of arguments—the Lord Jesus Christ!

Nothing in Christianity lies really outside Him. His Person and His Work embody all its dogmatic teaching. His example, "His Love which passeth knowledge," is the sum and life of all its morality.

Be ever more and more to us, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Thy answer to our boundless needs. Let us "sink to no second cause." Let us come to Thee. Let us yield to Thee. Let us follow Thee. Present Thyself evermore to us as literally our all in all. And so through a blessed fellowship in Thy wonderful humiliation we shall partake for ever hereafter in the exaltations of Thy glory, which is the glory of immortal love.

"*Philippian Studies.*"

## THE MONDAY BEFORE EASTER

LORD JESUS CHRIST, who didst as at this time make Martha's house in Bethany Thy home, and didst bless it, in the midst of Thy sorrows, with words and deeds of heavenly love; we beseech Thee to fill our home, now in this memorial Passion Week, with Thy presence, in which is the fulness of joy and peace. Make this Thy Bethany, dear Lord. Let each one of us, like Martha, diligently serve Thee, who hast suffered for us; and, like Mary, pour to Thee the odour of pure love; and, like Lazarus, sit with Thee at the table, in the holy confidence and friendship of faith in Thee, who hast raised us from the death of sin; for Thy Name's sake. *Amen.*

"*Prayers for the Home.*"

To sit at the feet of Jesus and assert self is an impossibility, moral and spiritual.

Would you understand the Love of God in Jesus Christ? Come close enough to Him to put yourself into His Hands.

## THE TUESDAY BEFORE EASTER

THOU, who as this week didst teach in the temple, and heal the blind and the lame, and bless the poor widow in her deed of love, and rebuke Thy enemies for their sin; come to us also now, with a special visit of Thy grace, in our home, and in Thy holy house. That which we see not, teach us, both concerning our sins which crucified Thee, and concerning Thy power to save. O faithful and true Witness, let Thy Holy Spirit now especially convince us, and humble us, and heal us, and bless us, and draw us to an ever fuller surrender of ourselves and our all to Thee, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

"*Prayers for the Home.*"

IT is the God who gave Christ who says to you, "Give yourself to me." Self-surrender is our side of that process by which the crooked is made straight, by which we are adjusted to Him and He to us.

# THE WEDNESDAY BEFORE EASTER

*"For the joy set before Him."*—Heb. xii. 2.

THIS is a precious verse; it contains that short summary of the whole counsel of the Gospel, "Look off unto Jesus"; the clue to the true way to peace with God, to rest and power in God, and to triumph over death.

But especially, it sets the Lord before us as the supreme Example of Faith. The inspired Writer has gone over Old Testament examples of Faith (that is to say, trust in God, taking Him at His Word); and now he crowns it all with Jesus, who supremely trusted the Father to keep His Word, and, after the Passion and Cross, to glorify Him eternally in the salvation of sinners.

This is a mystery. Christ was true God; how could He *trust?* Yes, but He was true Man, and as such, somehow, He "walked by faith." He knows by experience both the trials and joys of

faith. He knows the strain of it; He knows also the repose. "Even so, Father;" "Thy will be done." Tried Christian—tried by *Providence*, perhaps—lean on Jesus, look off unto Jesus, who led the way *in faith*.

There is a special instance of this in the words quoted as our heading. "He endured the Cross and despised the shame"—those tremendous present realities — why? Because He trusted Him who stood engaged, after them, to give Him "*joy*."

So He endured, because of a coming joy. Does this make you think less of your Saviour's unutterable love in dying, as if, after all, He had an equivalent for His pain? Ah, realize what it was! Such was the suffering, in its awful present, that the joy, in its magnificent future, only just counterbalanced it. The scales very nearly hung even in Gethsemane; the scale of woe very nearly sunk lowest and prevailed.

But now, this "joy set before Him," what was it?

i. The bliss of that wonderful upward Advent to the Father; "*now come I to Thee;*" a joy measurable only by the Triune God; the gladness with which the Son "entered into the joy" of Him that sent Him, having "finished His work."

ii. The joy of seeing of the travail of His soul in our salvation—our salvation from eternal death,

our salvation from daily sinning, our salvation from fear of the grave.

The Lord Jesus won all these deliverances for us by "the Cross" and "the shame." And as we, repentant sinners, come to claim each of them in succession, remember, it is not only a matter of wonderful prevision and wonderful accomplishment; it a matter of *the Saviour made glad*. Mysterious phenomenon! He is "most blessed for ever," in the supreme bliss of Godhead. Yes, but He is also made happy with a joy that would not otherwise be His, when man in his great need flies for refuge to Him, and abides in Him and is holy, and lies down to die, at last, calm and sure of glory, through Him that "loved him, and gave Himself for him." So let us now, and to-morrow, and for ever, give joy, for our poor part, to the Author and Finisher of our faith.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

## THURSDAY BEFORE EASTER

### THE HOLY COVENANT SEAL

LET us remember that, long before the Holy Supper was ordained, God had used His people's senses to convey blessing to their souls. He spoke to the soul of Noah a promise that there should be no more flood. But with the Promise He gave him the Rainbow. At that glorious Token he was to look with the eyes of his body, in order that his soul might more firmly grasp the promise, might be more sure that God would keep it. He called Abraham, and He gave Him the mighty promise that he should be "the heir of the world," and He "reckoned his faith to him for righteousness." But He also, at Abraham's request, gave a physical, visible Seal on the promises, first in a solemnly appointed covenanting sacrifice, and then in the ordinance of Circumcision. He redeemed Israel from Egypt, but He also ordained the meal of the Passover, which

was both a monument of the great deliverance and also, as it were, a signature and seal on all the promised blessings which should flow out of it.

Then at last came "the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God." And with it came what we may call its shining Rainbow, its happy Passover. Under the Gospel the Lord still used His people's senses to convey blessing to their souls. Drawing near to His precious atoning Death, He devised this grandly simple Seal upon its blessings. He was going, within a few hours, to be "broken" and "poured out" for their salvation. His holy Blood was to be drained from His wounded Body. And that Death was to be their life. Because of it, because He "died for the ungodly," giving "His life a ransom for many," they were to "live," in the sense of being fully forgiven, justly and lovingly accepted, before the Holiness of God. And also, because of that Death, they were to "live" in a living sense indeed; to live with spiritual and eternal life, to live in a real living union with their living Lord, "joined unto Him, one spirit." His own glorious Life was to be theirs, by the Holy Ghost who dwelt in Him their Head, and who, because of the merits of His Death, was now to be poured fully into them, the limbs.

Then also, in and through this their wonderful

union with Him, they were to be livingly united to one another. Each limb joined to Christ was, in Him, to be joined to every other.

Thus out of the Lord's blessed Death were to flow their full Pardon, their divine Life-power, in union with Him, and also their happy Society in union with one another.

Now of all this He gave His people His sacred *Seal* in His holy Supper. He gave it to strengthen their faith in Him, and thereby to deepen their life in Him, and their union with Him and with one another.

Age after age that Ordinance has been observed. And because *He* gave it to us, it, like Him, is "the same, yesterday and to-day and for ever"—"till He come." To-day, as much as on the night in which He was betrayed, it speaks *direct from the Lord Jesus Christ*, through the believer's senses, to his soul. It is the always effectual, always divine, guarantee to the believer of the reality of his redemption, and of the fulness of it. It is the Seal upon the great Parchment of the new and eternal Covenant.

Going to-day to the sacred Table, in calm and humble faith, we in effect go to that "large upper room," and take our place beside Peter and John, and receive from *the Lord* the just-hallowed Bread

and Cup, and say each to himself—"*As surely as these lips have received the King's own Sign and Seal, at His own giving, so surely do I, taking Him at His word, possess in Him all the blessings of His death. So surely am I accepted in Him the Beloved. So surely does He, my eternal Life, live in me, and I in Him. So surely will He raise me up in glory. So surely am I one with the whole Church, which is His mystical Body, even the blessed Company of all faithful people.*"

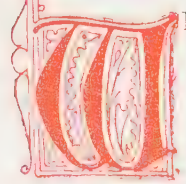
Thus we "go in the strength of that meat." And He graciously bids us come for it again and again, and every time renew that personal interview and transaction with our King who died for us, as He seals all our blessings to us with His own hands anew.

"*The Pledges of His Love.*"

# GOOD FRIDAY

*"The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."*—Acts xx. 28.

*"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also fully give us all things?"*—Rom. viii. 32.



E meet round the Cross of Jesus, where the work is finished, the Lamb slain. Now, to faith and memory, the holy body is laid in Joseph's tomb. We gather round the empty Cross, and by the grave henceforth glorified by the presence of Jesus; there to think of the treasures and glories won for us by the Crucifixion. The Lord transfigured the grave by lying in it. All thoughts of the grave are now to be penetrated with light, and joy, and hope, for Jesus lay there, and is "the first-fruits" out of it.

Two aspects of the atoning Sacrifice are given us in the text. First, *the purchase by blood*, then, *the free gift of all things with Christ.*

i. St. Paul says to the elders at Miletus (Acts xx. 28) that Jesus died that He might "*purchase.*"

Yes, there is in the death of Christ a transaction of purchase, a sublime *commerce*. Remember, O Christian, that the act which has rescued you has also bought you. Good Friday is the day of your purchase, the anniversary of that great transaction by which actually you have been made the property of Another; the day for fresh recollections of the sale and purchase through which they who "belong" have gone. Let Christians who recognize what has been done for them in pardon turn round the document of acquittal and see on the other side the deed of purchase. Let them gather round the Cross, to spell in the light of the death of Jesus (for His death is a Shechinah-cloud, full of light) the watchword, "*I belong.*"

Is it strange that such Value should have been given for you and for me? But the case demanded it. Nothing less could avail if the captives were to be lawfully delivered; and therefore the vast price was paid. So, not because of your emotions, but because of the blood of Christ, you are His "peculiar people," a people, that is to say, *who are His personal property*. He has bought you, soul and body, means, time, temper, tongue.

And oh, *what safety* to be owned by Him! What certainty of guidance is here given, what guarantee of sure keeping! The Hand which has thus appro-

priated you will make no mistakes with you, will not leave hold of you when the foe assails. There is nothing so strong, or so gentle, in heaven or earth as the possessing hand of Jesus Christ, who has bought you so dear and holds you so fast. So do not fear that sovereign ownership. It makes altogether for peace and order. The Lord does not dislocate human life by possessing it. He does not put "secular" interests, as such, under a ban, when He claims mastery over them; rather, He hallows them. He puts all in order, by centering all upon Himself.

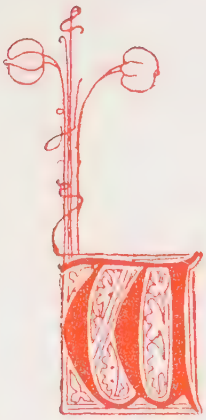
ii. The same Apostle, not at Miletus but in his room at Corinth, writing to Rome, asks the question, "How shall He not *with Him* also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32). He does not mean that the "all" things are to be given beside Christ, and apart from Him, but that they are involved in the gift of Him. They are to be enjoyed because the Father has given the Son. In proportion to the depth of the death He suffered, and the vastness of the price He paid, is meant to be the height to which He raises us, the liberty and relief to which He calls us. Do we seek to show our thanks to Him for His atoning grief? Let us enter on the blessings He died to win us, those "innumerable benefits which, by His precious blood-shedding, He hath obtained to us." If we do not enter upon them, is it not to withhold the thanks

which will best please Him? When David's three mighty men burst their way to the well of Bethlehem, and came back victorious to their king, he poured out the precious water as a libation to the Lord. It was a sacred act; but surely, in a human way, the heroes must have grieved that their lord missed the draught which they had won at their lives' risk for him. The Lord Jesus Christ, bursting through the powers of darkness, has drawn the water of life for us, winning for us, from a deep well, rest of soul, strength in weakness, joy in sorrow, power for service. How can we requite His act? By drinking heartily the water He has won; by entering into the possession He has purchased; by letting Him thus "see of the travail of His soul." Our great Saviour has "offered rest"—rest not after toil, but in it. It is put into our hands by Him who went down into the depths to purchase it, by the sacrifice of Himself. Then—let us take it, and be glad.

The Father loves to give great gifts with His Son. Open that divine Casket, His Name, and see the treasure within. "All things;" "all grace;" readiness for "all the will of God;" the working of "all things" for your good; "all the fulness of God," to take possession of your weak heart, and make it what your Redeemer died that it might be.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

## EASTER EVEN



E meet on this sacred day as it were around Thy quiet Tomb, Lord Jesus, where the Roman guards kept watch, and the seal was on the stone, and all was silent in the place where Thy body lay, while Thy disciples mourned and wept far off. Ah, dear Lord, we need not so to weep, for we know Thee now as risen, to die no more. But therefore the more thankfully we bless Thee for Thy Burial, and because by Thy rest in the grave Thou hast hallowed all the graves of all Thy saints. Wherever their dear dust sleeps, there is as it were Thy grave, already opened by Thy Resurrection. Whether Thy members lie in the green churchyard, or in the deep sea, or in the ashes of the martyr's fire, Thou knowest them all, and will raise them all up at the last day. Blessed be Thou, who by Thy death hast abolished death. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

"*Prayers for the Home.*"

# Easter Even

Hail, blessed Sabbath of the Saviour's tomb!
Justly we consecrate thy vernal hours;
Thy name is fragrant as the pure perfume
Of thy own woodland violet after showers.

To-day with humblest hope, yet glorified,
Our frail mortality may ponder well
Its coming sleep—as by the Lord's own side,
As in the holy dusk of Joseph's cell.

Thy silent morn is radiant from above
With vision'd light of happy Paradise,
Light such as there the Sun of endless love
Sheds on the entering saint's immortal eyes.

Thy starlit eve, through moveless branches seen,
The while in prayer we pace the twilight field,
With voiceless music speaks their rest serene
Who sleep in Jesus till with Him reveal'd.

Dear day, on thee with chasten'd thought we'll turn
To where on earth's wide breast, afar or near,
The buried saints repose, and Christians mourn
In hope their long'd-for treasures, doubly dear.

Ah, holy graves! The grave of Jesus lends
Not hope alone, but glory to your rest;
E'en where Elijah wing'd with flame ascends,
Scarce seems his deathless lot so deeply blest.

## Easter Even

Ah, holy graves! In regions lone and still
'Neath polar clouds ye lie, or tropic blaze;
Or where the village tower on English hill
Points to the blue sphere o'er the meadow haze.

To-day, as ever, earth and sky roll on,
Silent, the same, while sleep our saints in death;
But we remember Christ beneath the stone,
And the last Easter dawns upon our faith.

"*In the House of the Pilgrimage.*"

"I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore."
*Rev. i. 18.*

# Easter Day

"To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living."—*Romans xiv. 9.*

"If we believe" this, *as* you believe it, O follower of the Lord—what then? Where shall we limit its peace, its joy, its living power? With this glorious FACT meet the accusations of the enemy, for the Resurrection seals the Atonement as for ever perfect and accepted. With this lay the antidote to doubt and fear, for, if Jesus rose again, He lives, and He is at hand. With this draw yourself nearer and ever nearer to Him. With this rebuke the threats of death; with this sweetly overwhelm the pangs of bereavement, as you stand in meek but triumphant confidence above the beloved grave; for as we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so—as *the inevitable* consequence—them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

# EASTER SUNDAY

*"Now on the first day of the week Mary of Maydala comes early, while it was still dusk, to the tomb, and sees the stone taken out of the tomb."*—St. John xx. 1.

WE observe the connecting "*now*." It points to previous details, and reminds us that the Resurrection is indissolubly linked, in significance as in fact, to what precedes it—the Cross. It is these two which make the one glory of the work of Christ. It is "the Living One *who became dead*" (Rev. i. 18) who is our Peace, and who can lay His hand on us and say, "Fear not."

As we review the interval between the two, I would touch on one point only in the picture of the disciples drawn for us in the Gospel narrative; I mean the collocation and the contrast, so startling yet so deeply truth-like, of the total failure of their faith and the survival of their love.

When the Lord rose, perhaps no living person, excepting (surely) His mother, consciously and intelligently "believed on His Name." No living person

except her, trusted His promise to rise again, and understood His death in the light of it, resting the soul upon His sacrifice. So this very passage tells us in regard of no less personages than John and Peter. But such a statement would have been the very last thing which a fabricator would have excogitated, and the very last which would have arisen unconsciously in minds (such as many historical critics assume all the minds of the primeval Church to have been) pregnant with legend, or facile vehicles for the growth of myths. Who in that simple age, with its literary "helplessness," would have thought of *constructing* an utter collapse of faith in the central circle of the disciples, just when Jesus was accomplishing His alleged victory—a collapse just *because of* the Cross, which so soon became somehow the hope and glory of His followers?

But knowledge and reflection now show us how true to history, to time and conditions, and to the human soul, all this picture is. All the prepossessions of those men and women, and their cherished wishes, lay in the direction of a triumph not through death at all. The attention they ought to have given to their Master's words about His death had been all the while distracted and neutralized by these intense expectations and preferences. When the stern fact of the Crucifixion came, their confidence was not only sur-

prised, but crushed; and so it would have remained, if Jesus had not risen again.

And yet—they loved Him. They must have been tortured with worse than doubts about His Messianic character, if, indeed, in those distressing hours they had mental leisure to *doubt* amidst their absorbing *grief*. But *some* formidable questionings, not only about Him, but about all they had known or hoped about God, must have mingled with their tears. And yet—they loved Him. Women, Apostles, all, in one degree or another, they loved Him still. And in this, too, there is a deep and verifiable truth of the human heart. Mere grief and alarm may easily be imagined over the unlooked-for death of any strong leader. But the leader these persons had lost was Jesus—the Man Jesus, such as the Gospels draw Him. Such a Chief, even had He misled them in the end, must still (it is true in the logic of the heart, which alone is in question here) be loved, for the time, with an intensity only the greater for His fall.

May I draw a somewhat evident lesson? Let us give continual thanks for the broad, strong foundations of fact and reason, of cogent and manifold proof, which lie beneath the assertion of the Creed, that He who died for our sins rose again the third day. History has nothing else in it so firm and solid, in the historical sense, as that position. But the human mind is a

strange and subtle thing, and it is possible that we may, in certain states of it, find ourselves doubting, as it were, against our reason; seeing the steps and links, but so as to fail to combine them at the moment into a result of conscious and invigorating certainty. Then let us be thankful indeed if we bear about in us another part of the vast evidence of Christianity, that is, of Jesus Christ; the thing which kept the adherence of those disciples tenacious when, for a dark season, their full faith was gone. This Jesus Christ has, somehow, touched, and changed, and set free, my soul, my being. The more I have seen, trusted, loved Him, the more always I have stood clear of sin, of self. I cannot but love Him still. And as for these haunting doubts, I will at least drag them into the light of His love, and look at them there. If I feel for a sad moment, "They have taken away my Lord," I will at that very moment remember why, among other reasons, I can call Him "my Lord" at all; He, or if not He, then nothing, has freed me from many more than seven sins. Is not doubt about such a Power a self-detected fallacy already?

But on the other side, we must not press too far the resemblance between Mary's case and our own. What was, after all, this passionate love of the disciples when their faith was gone? In a great measure, it was only passionate. Warm as it was, it could not well have

persisted. As time went on it must have been infected with the bitterness of an ever-growing pain at the loss, the blank, the *mistake*. It was the love more of nature than of grace—let us not fear to say it—which brought Mary to the tomb. The heavenly love—the joyful, holy, undecaying love—was yet to come: love stirred from its depths by light and power divine. But in order to this she had yet to know Jesus as the Risen One, who was dead, but is alive for evermore.

As such we know Him, and have felt His power.

Let us stand by the side of Mary of Magdala, with that knowledge and consciousness in our grateful hearts. Let us look into that tomb, and see it full of light—the seat of angels, the gate of heaven. Let us turn round with her, and see the reason of it all—the Lord Jesus risen indeed: Jesus calling us by our name, while we answer, "Rabboni, my Master, O my Master!"

"*Jesus and the Resurrection.*"

## EASTER MONDAY

*"And behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs."* — St. Luke xxiv. 13.

THESE two disciples were not Apostles. See verse 33, where we read that "they found the eleven"; showing they were not of that number themselves.

The wayfarers were probably glad to leave Jerusalem, the place where they had experienced the greatest possible disappointment. They had thought that they had found a Saviour; and now they thought that they had been deluded. Yet it must ever surprise us that they should have gone "that same day," especially after hearing even faint rumours of the Resurrection. But grief had shut their hearts against the very things that were designed to give them "everlasting comfort." Grief, let us remember, is *in itself* no power for good. When grace goes with it, it is a holy and a healing thing; but *by itself* it is only hardening and deadening. So these two, in the

heavy dulness of their grief, were going out of Jerusalem, and they sought Emmaus. Emmaus lay probably to the north-west of the city; they were possibly Galileans on their way back to Galilee; but in any case they wished to get away from Jerusalem and its associations. And in this they were a specimen of all the disciples; all apparently, after the Crucifixion, tended to separate from one another. Peter and John were apart; Thomas was apart; the holy women were grouped together, but apart from the rest. They could not bear to watch together through the night of sorrow, because they had no hope of the morning; the loss of a Saviour, for such it seemed to be, had blighted all. And it is so still. To lose sight of the Saviour for ourselves isolates our souls, while a joyful view of His presence can never be a selfish thing. The more the soul sees Him for itself, the more its sympathies expand to others too. Later the disciples did indeed get together. And they so held together, as we know, that like a mighty magnet they drew the world after them. What was it that wrought the change? It was the presence of that Saviour, whose absence had left them scattered like water spilt upon the ground.

The exact site of Emmaus is not quite certain. It is strange how few spots in Holy Scripture can be identified. It is only at the well of Samaria, perhaps,

that we can stand and be certain that there, *within a few square yards*, the feet of Jesus once stood. It is as if on the one hand the Saviour would remind us by names and places how true and literal was His life on earth, and, on the other hand, by obliterating the minuter details, would set our mind on things above.

They started probably about noon on their eight miles' walk; and as they went they talked. We should like to have heard what they said, though surely neither of them took a hopeful view. Confidence was quite gone. Love did indeed remain; but it was a love that would soon have grown faint, had not the Lord come back to them.

There was just this ray of light in their conversation, that it was concerned with eternal interests. We find "the decease" of Jesus the subject of conversation on various occasions in the Gospels; on the Mount of Transfiguration; on the way to Jerusalem, when He was still with His Apostles; and now these two talk of it, under the cloud of its actual occurrence. There used to be a saying among the Jews that if one Rabbi met another it was shameful if nothing about the Law passed between them. These two pious Jews could not but talk about Israel's Hope, sad as the talk was just then.

If we watch our conversation we shall find

that it is much easier to talk about persons than about things; and, if I mistake not, this kind of conversation is little profitable as a rule. But there is one exceptional case, in which talk on a personal subject is the highest and noblest of all; that is to say, when it touches on Jesus Christ, the supreme personal Reality. Temperaments and capacities may differ; but let us look within and ask if for us there exists that one supreme aid to the opening of our lips concerning Christ — that our hearts are full of Him.

The Lord probably walked alongside the two men for some way, overhearing their conversation, that He might join naturally in it. And we are reminded of the perpetual, though unseen, Presence of "that same Jesus" now. True, it is now altogether a spiritual Presence, made near to us by the Holy Spirit. But it is not therefore the less wonderfully real, and every true disciple is called to use it, and to enjoy its joy.

You, perhaps, are going just now from some desolated "Jerusalem" to an Emmaus; stricken with loss or sorrow; walking towards the setting sun. "Jesus Himself will draw near" to you, Christian man. He will speak to you; He will ask you to speak to Him; to hear your account of the matter, just as it seems to you. Well, make very free with

your Lord. Tell Him all; the coldness, the sad disappointments in the soul's experiences; the doubts, the bewilderments. Then listen. And in due time the very heart will burn within you, and you shall see the Lord.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

Like those Emmaus travellers let us go
Forth from the city-gate of things below;
Christ at our side, His Scripture for our light,
Here burning hearts, and there—the beatific sight.

"*Songs in the House of the Pilgrimage.*"

# EASTER TUESDAY

*"Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken."* — St. Luke xxiv. 25.

E left the disciples explaining their doubts and difficulties, yea, their despondency and despair, to the Friend who came to them. It is helpful to see how they argued against their hope with the very arguments (ver. 19, etc.) which ought to have proved it true.

In verse 19 the Saviour asks "*what* things?"—not that He was ignorant, but in order that He might deal with them from their own words. So now, surely, He would have us explain to Him our sorrow, the very things which try the mind and try the conscience, on purpose that He may take us up and deal with us according to our own account of ourselves. Thus from point to point they state their difficulties, and disclose the pathetically *illogical* perplexity of their souls. For we note that they did not look upon Him as a deceiver, but as a prophet, only not *the Christ*. It

was a strange inconsistency; for, if they trusted Him as a prophet, they should have believed Him, when He said, for example, that He was to bear the sins of many, and to be slain, and to rise again. There is nothing so unreasonable, after all, as unbelief; there is nothing so reasonable as faith. They should have seen, not by faith merely, but by *reason*, by evidential facts, that He must rise again. But such is unbelief still; such is the result of a beclouded view of the Lord Jesus.

Then, further, "the chief priests and our rulers crucified Him." Here was a severe trial to their faith, that just these persons should have condemned their Master. These were their own revered religious chiefs; men honoured for their learning and their sanctity. Must they not have had *some reason* for their rejection of the Nazarene?

Then comes the saddest *past tense*, perhaps, that could well be spoken. "We *trusted* that it had been He." Yes, we once did trust, but now — we think so no more! Strange to say, they find a reason for this from its being now "the third day," forgetting that that was the very day on which He had said that He should rise.

Then, in a wavering, troubled way, they go on to note hints of mercy and of hope against which, however, they had shut their sad hearts. With a strange

dulness of intelligence, and an agonized bewilderment of heart, they interpret the first streaks of the sun's rising glory as a sign that the sun had set.

"Certain women" (verse 23) had seen, they say, "*a vision* of angels"; and (verse 24) "certain of their company had gone to the sepulchre, but *Him* they saw not." The very fact that the holy Body was not found in the grave, a fact which surely, at least, should have suggested hope, is cast aside by these desponding souls as if it meant nothing. Evidently they thought it nothing; or they could not have walked eight miles away from the scene that very afternoon. No, they could not nerve themselves to clear reasoning at all, so prejudiced were they against hope and joy by the tremendous disappointment of the Cross, a disappointment which itself was due to their own failure to listen aright to their Lord before. They take the fact which ought to have been the first note of triumph, and make the last word of their despair.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

*"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself."*—St. Luke xxiv. 27.

WHAT a delightful contrast between the end and the beginning of this story! The two disciples set out at noon with heavy hearts and weary steps; they hasten back in the dark to meet joy with joy, and to find the Lord again.

It is delightful to feel that all the difference was made by Jesus Christ. And it is so now with those who seek to follow Him through the pilgrimage of this world. The great and glorious difference between depression and discouragement, and hope, and sympathy, and joy, will ever be made by the realized presence of Jesus Christ.

The Saviour spent that afternoon exclusively with the Bible. He was determined to be known of them *first* through the Bible, even before He was known in the breaking of bread. Such was

the Bible to Jesus Christ that He knew it to be better to reveal Himself, not through a vision of glory from His risen form, but through the written Word. Now for ages and ages He has been out of sight, but the very means which He used that afternoon to make them realize their salvation we have in our hands to-day.

Let us open our Old Testament always with the light of the Walk to Emmaus shed upon it.

We gather that the passages He chose were all connected with His sufferings. Observe that the very first word which we can interpret of the Saviour (Gen. iii. 15) was of His *sufferings*. That first prophecy meant mercy to us and defeat to Satan, but defeat through the sufferings of the Conqueror. Again, we may be sure that the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and the twenty-second Psalm, the psalm of glory through exceeding pain, were parts of the Emmaus exposition. It had all been fulfilled within about thirty to forty hours just past; in His eyes, as He came back from eternity, what must the reality have been!

But now they drew near to Emmaus. The sun was not quite set; it was "*towards* evening"; "and He made as though He would have gone further"; and so indeed He would have done if they had not detained Him. He knew what was about to

happen, as eternally He knows; but none the less He left them to ask. It was doubtless an effort to ask, for there was surely an awe upon them; but they made it, and they were rewarded. Let us too remember that He delights to be invited in. He "stands at the door and knocks"; but He rejoices also when His people speak to Him, without the knock, and say, "Abide with us." So they "constrained" Him, reverently but really. And it was for a very simple reason; they could not do without Him.

With what a *homely* argument they plead with Him to give them His presence still! "Stay with us, Thou who hast charmed our sadness away; give us Thy company, and if Thou wilt, take ours, *for it is getting dark*." So He went in, this great Conqueror, "declared to be the Son of God with power." He went in, at the cottage door, to sit down with those two troubled men, those slow-hearted disciples. He was none the less ready for their humble company because He was the almighty Victor over sin and death, just come from the battle to the triumph.

So it is with the Saviour still. Speaking from His glory (Rev. iii. 20), He still says, "I will come in and sup with him." In asking Him so to come, let us rest upon the fact that He is indeed willing

to do so; *He delights* to give us His time, His presence, Himself.

It seems unlikely, to be sure, that the supper at Emmaus was a Communion. But we can well adapt the record here to what Christians find at the Table of their Lord, as they recognize that the holy Feast is the Lord's own pledge of all His blessings; His own autograph, as it were, under all His promises. If so, and when we take the Emmaus meal as a suggestion of the Lord's Supper, let us recall the Bible lesson which led up to it, and let us prepare ourselves for the Holy Communion by study of the Holy Word.

Perhaps it was not physically good for them that the deep, wonderful joy of that recognition should continue long. Perhaps to train them at once to walk by faith, not by sight, He made this interview short, and vanished from their eyes.

And now, they turn and speak to one another. "Did not our hearts burn within us?" Probably they had not said so at the time; but the confession was irrepressible now. And observe in the next place, that the personal joy they had attained set them instantly upon work for others. At midday, when they left Jerusalem, they thought only of themselves. Now they are sure of the Lord Jesus for themselves; and lo! they immediately

think of others who need to find Him too. There is nothing so unselfish in its tendency as a thorough grasp of Christ for ourselves. So "they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem." It was a dark walk back, but darkness or light would be alike to them in that hour of unspeakable joy, and on the way to carry it to other hearts.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

*"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins: then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."*—1 Cor. xv. 17–28.

WE gather here what would be *the state of the case if Christ had not risen.* Go back in thought to the garden-sepulchre. Imagine the third morning come, and gone, and no motion of that corpse within its linen folds; no stirring of that sealed stone! Imagine the day wearing through, and still no sign of life. The Roman guards at last would have gone, and the place would have resumed its quiet. What would have been the sequel? Assuredly, for one thing, we should not now keep a day in memory of Jesus Christ. We should never have heard of Him. For there would have been no Church, no Faith, no

Gospel. The disciples would have soon scattered, to mourn, to forget, to die. What course the world would have run in other things, we know not. But of this we may be sure: no Resurrection — no Gospel; no Resurrection—no faith in Jesus as the Lord of Life.

No risen Jesus — no salvation, no pardon, no heaven for sinners! Not only would no temples of worship have ever risen to Christ's dear Name; not only would no Christian world have ever grown up; but no sinful soul of man would have escaped its doom. Observe St. Paul's reasoning here. He writes to *the believers* at Corinth; to Christians, true Christians; men who had repented of sin and were living a new life; men who were walking in the narrow path, and suffering in it too. Nevertheless, these, even these, these altered, purified, saintly believers, would have been, says St. Paul, still in their sins, if Christ were still in His grave.

Mark well that truth. For what does it tell us? It lays it down, clear as the day, that in order to a sinner's peace with God the all-important thing is the completed, successful Work of Christ; the slain Lord risen; the sacrificed Saviour accepted in our place.

But lo, from Joseph's grave into Joseph's garden the Risen One stepped forth in the power of an

endless life; rejoicing in that deep morning calm over His atonement finished and accepted for us. Therefore is the believing sinner accepted in Him. Your faith is *not* vain. Ye are *not* still in your sins. For He is risen.

"Then they which fell asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

St. Paul is still carrying on the question, "What if He had not risen?" He has just said that believers *in life* would have nothing to believe; faith would have had no resting-ground, sin no pardon, no atonement; for if the Lord had not risen, His death would have been thereby proved a failure, His sacrifice a vain attempt. And now, with stern consistency, St. Paul follows the thought *beyond the grave*. Think, he says, of your brethren gone before. Think of their happy deaths, their dying testimony of peace and hope. Think how you speak of them as "for ever with the Lord"; as resting from all toil, pain, and care, in Him. Ah, if Christ be not risen—it is all an awful delusion. If He did not rise, those seemingly happy ones woke in the other world to a lost eternity! They too, if He had not risen, would have been still in their sins. Yes, he continues, if in this life only we have hoped in Christ; if, that is, our hopes in Christ are confined to this

life; if they are a delusion; if He is not real (and He would be so, if not risen); if, when we pass the river, we find on the other shore no risen Saviour there, no Christ for us in eternity; then, be sure of it, no past thoughts, or resolves, or reformations of ours will save us. We shall go down to the darkness "most miserable of all men," for to our then present woe will be added the nameless weight and agony of the surprise, the difference, the disappointment, of those who had looked for heaven, on what seemed good grounds—and behold it was shut for ever!

"But now is Christ risen from the dead." Here, thanks be to God, is the fact. We have viewed the awful alternative—which *we* should have been helpless to prevent. But the Lord prevented it. The Father accepted the sacrifice of His Son. The Atonement was sealed by the Resurrection. Christ rose, to die no more. And the Resurrection tells us that it is so!

"The First-fruits of them that slept."

So closes the text, linking, with the adamantine chain of God's purpose, the rising of the Saviour to the rising of His buried saints. Jesus rose from Joseph's tomb; therefore, as sure as an eternal Will can make it, yonder graves of saints around us shall give up their treasures. Earth and sky

may roll their round in silence. To-morrow may *look* just like to-day. But it will not *be* just like to-day; for it will be one step nearer to the morning of our resurrection. For Jesus rose again.

Oh, blessed Easter truth! Oh, double light! Look backward; yonder is the light of the Cross; the finished Atonement; the soul pardoned for His sake. Look forward; yonder is the dawn of the coming glory; the eternal city; the soul's home for ever with the Lord. Yet a few steps further; a little longer patience under His loving discipline; a little longer strife with sin, and care, and woe; and behold, the last great Easter—the endless farewell to evil — the great rejoicing around our Lord Jesus Christ, as we rise from our graves to meet Him. For if Christ rose, the first-fruits, then they which are Christ's must also rise at His coming.

"*Fordington Sermons.*"

# THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

*"Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"*—St. John xi. 40.

THE Saviour is here speaking to a disciple who was under a great strain. Martha and her sister had just had their faith put to a tremendous test. Lazarus had been ill; they had sent, and in time, to the Lord to come and heal him, and He abode two whole days without stirring, and only arrived when Lazarus had been some days buried. Under these circumstances, with her brother in the grave close by, and in the grave *because* the Lord had come too late, Martha met Him.

Very wonderful is the strength and simplicity of faith seen in Martha here. The Lord had asked the way to the grave; on the way He "wept," and again, He "groaned." This looked little like one who was about to put forth almighty power; rather it looked

like one who had failed, and was at a loss. Yes, it was a great trial to faith that "Jesus wept," and "Jesus groaned in the spirit, and was troubled."

They come to the grave, with its heavy stone door; He bids them take away the stone. Remember, we know what was about to happen, but Martha did not know; to her the moving of the stone seemed only an exposure of the reality of her brother's death. All this was a tremendous strain, a strain upon the inmost heart, lacerated with grief.

Already Martha had been put through one sore test. Jesus had said to her (ver. 25), "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." But Lazarus had lived, and Lazarus had believed, and Lazarus was *dead*. Yet her Lord turns to her and says, "Believest thou this?" Let us put ourselves in her place. How should we have answered? How *have* we answered, in times of agony, when the shadow of death has come down upon us, and into us?

Remember again that it was *Martha* to whom this question was addressed. If we had been contriving the story, surely we should have made Him ask it of Mary—Mary, the spiritual disciple. But it was Martha who won the victory; she could not explain the mystery, but she knew the Lord. "Yes, Lord,

I believe that Thou art the Christ" (ver. 27). "I cannot explain the Resurrection, but I *know Thee.* I have found Thee in the light, and now I trust Thee in the dark. I have seen Thy face, and though now I scarcely feel Thy hand, I trust Thee still."

How was her faith rewarded? Behold the brother restored to life; Jesus Christ and His Truth magnificently re-established, glorified with tenfold brightness, "after she had suffered for a while."

Let us take this as a message for ourselves. Our Saviour makes demands upon us sometimes for great self-denial, or for very difficult duty, or again for reliance quite in the dark. Many of us know what it is, under the long strain of sorrow, or under its sharp and sudden pangs, to find it very difficult indeed to say with Martha, "Yes, Lord, I believe."

But "said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest *believe* thou shouldest *see* the glory of God?" (ver. 40). So He said that day; so He says now. "If thou wouldest meekly consent not to know all at once, but to trust me whatever I do; if thou wouldest lie still in my hand, while I carry thee through the waters or the fires—then, what? Then, one day, thou shalt see." "We walk by faith, not by sight"; that is the rule at present. But to walk by sight, not by faith, shall be the rule hereafter. We shall one day be where everything is cleared up, and there we

shall see that what our Saviour led us through in the darkness was used with supreme skill by Him to train us for that perfect light which pours from His unveiled smile.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

*"He showed Himself alive after His passion."*—Acts i. 3.

MY object in taking these words is a simple one. Let us watch the Risen Saviour as He appears to His followers and deals with them in His Resurrection life and power, on some representative occasions. And let us thus remind ourselves that He offers Himself to be the Friend, Companion, Guide, and King of His disciples under all the circumstances of human life.

I take first the interview with Mary in the garden, recorded by St. John (xx. 11–18). In this, His first interview after the Resurrection, He deals in the solitude of private intimacy with a soul apart; He meets it, not in a consecrated temple, but in a quiet garden.

I gather from this short history that Christ offers Himself to each of us as the individual Friend. In times when perhaps you are literally alone, or alone as to heart-sympathy, your Lord offers to be the

Friend who comes closer than any other individual spirit can come to yours. He comes to call you by name, to hear what you have to say in the deepest confidence to Him, to bless you with the friendship of Himself. Wonderful thought! He rises in majesty from the dead, and what does He first do with His victory? He comforts the solitude of a woman's broken heart, by showing Himself to her as her Shepherd, Healer, Friend.

The risen Jesus offers likewise to be your individual Comforter, your understanding Pastor. And He has all the gracious leisure of an endless life in which to attend to you.

We note that this conversation of friends took place in a garden—as if to remind us that not only when we are worshipping in the house of prayer, but out under the sky of the common day, "Jesus is there," the unseen, inseparable Companion.

And now, another interview occurs (St. Luke xxiv. 13–32). It is the afternoon of Easter Day. Observe again the Lord: it is the hour of His triumph; He has conquered the powers of death. How does He spend the triumph-time? Walking as Man with men along a country road; keeping company with two Galileans, slow of heart, disappointing in spiritual condition. Gently he introduces Himself, and then talks to them about the Bible. Their hearts burn

as they go. At last they sit down to a meal with Him, as with a friend. He breaks the bread; they know Him; it is the Lord.

Here the Risen One offers, in the majesty of His eternal life, to enter into human fellowship, to make Himself harmoniously "the third with the two." Blessed is the friendship that is ruled by the Walk to Emmaus. Blessed are those, in any way associated with each other, who have the Lord in their company, to sweeten it, to hallow it, to fill it with His peace. Till grace teaches us better, we are all shy of Him. We may willingly pay adoration to His name; but when He says, "Shall I sit by you in your home, and go with you when you walk, and be everywhere your Friend, and overhear your hourly talk?"—then it is grace, not nature, which welcomes Jesus in. But shall we be afraid of "the Son of the Blessed"? Shall He not be loved, as the unseen Listener to all we say to one another, the intimate Associate of all our life? Shall we not make the experiment? We shall find that, far from spoiling any friendship worth the keeping, He will elevate and sweeten it unspeakably. And where will He do so? Emmaus answers that He will do it "out in the open"; where people were passing up and down; in the business of everyday life. It was just thus (for that day was not the Sabbath, but the

day after) that He gave Himself to those two friends, and so that the walk to the village was for them a walk to the gate of Heaven.

Another interview; and now it is the evening (St. John xx. 19–23). The doors are shut on the disciples; the meal has been eaten; the food is still on the table. And again, it is no sacred place, in the sense of temple or of church; it is a "living-room." "Then came Jesus, and stood in the midst." Here I see Him offering Himself as the Friend of our social hours—when we are gathered, not at His Table, but at our own. He cares to be the companion of our common life; not to throw a chill over it, not to rebuke one single thing worth the attention of the heart and mind of man; only to be the ruling Presence, the willing Associate, who is also Lord and King.

Looking at this scene, I plead for such a heart-welcome of Him that it shall never be unnatural if the name of Christ comes out in the common conversation, or if the work of Christ enters into it. Does this sound paradoxical? It ought not so to be. Approach this social enjoyment of your Lord by the path of a personal intimacy with Him. Approach it by the secrecy of Mary's interview, and by the privacy of that at Emmaus, and you will find that there is nothing strained in the recognition of His

nearness at your home table, or by your home fireside.

It was (and I believe that it still is) the custom of the Jews at the Passover to leave *an empty chair*—for the expected Messiah to find ready if He should come. I do not say that we should literally so set a seat for Christ; but let us do so in spirit. I have heard it said that the subject of religion is not suitable for a drawing-room. Nay, the Lord of the Upper Chamber claims all our chambers, if we ourselves belong to Him.

Lastly we have the interview (St. John xxi.) by the lake-side in Galilee. The Lord has watched His people through their night of toil. As the morning dawns He stands on the shore; He grants them a great haul of fishes; He makes Himself known to them in an act of power and love. They see and know Him; then they sit down with Him and break their fast on the beach, in His company, and as His guests. What do we learn here? Again we are out in the common places of life. The garden, the walk, and now the shore—it was there that Jesus "shewed Himself after His passion." And here again we behold the willingness of our Master to be with us in whatsoever the common day may bring. The disciples are in the midst of their earthly occupations, busy with boat and oar,

fully occupied with the interests of their common work; and He thinks this no unsuitable opportunity for manifesting Himself to them. I learn thus that He claims our hours of labour and of business —not to put the daily duty out of order, but rather to glorify it and speed it, by the thought that He is there.

Thus the Risen Saviour, in His mysterious human life, claims for Himself, not parts and fragments, not nooks and corners, of your heart and life, but the whole space, the whole time, that He may bless it all. Is this thought welcome to us and dear? To many, as I well know, it is the very joy of their hearts to know that they cannot ever be out of the reach of their unseen Lord. Well, let us *cultivate* this joy. Spiritual joy, what is it? It is the Lord Jesus Christ realized. Cultivate this joy, then, by getting better and ever better acquainted with Him.

So let the Risen One come to you, and manifest Himself to you, and open to you His heart, and open to you His arms.

Blessed are they who have so seen His face that they shall not be afraid of being held for ever in His hands who is their Master and their Friend.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

*"So when they had broken their fast, Jesus says to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, am I dear to you more than to these?"*—St. John xxi. 15.

THE silent meal was over, and Jesus speaks. He speaks so as indeed to answer fully the unspoken question, if they had felt it stir within them, *Who art Thou?* He who now speaks is indeed The Lord.

Peter is addressed; he is singled out to be for a while the one figure, with Jesus, in our view. And this is done (the Lord often does so still in His grace and providence) so as to leave the disciple at once humble and happy.

We may suppose that Peter needed both humiliation and happiness specially just then. His struggle to reach the shore may have had in it some slight trace of a personal display of devotion. And on the other hand there was a deep wound in his soul, left

by the denials of that remembered and recent night of terror. Self-assertion and inmost sadness sometimes lie near together. And to both maladies the blessed Lord knows how to apply His searching, healing hand.

. . . . . .

The Lord deliberately and solemnly restored Peter, with His own lips, and before six apostolic witnesses. The mighty wound needed a proportionate remedy. And the remedy was to be such as also to remind him for ever of his snares and his weakness, that he might watch and stand.

. . . . . .

"*Simon, son of Jonah, am I dear to you?* Does your heart, with a strong, full choice of love and gladness, choose me? Does it rest in me, as all its salvation and also all its desire?" Wonderful question! Wonderful in that it shows such a care on the Lord's part for the love of such poor hearts as ours! "Give me *thine heart*" is the most searching, as it is the most characteristic, of the demands of the God of Revelation, of the God of Christ, of Christ the Son of God.

Let me quote the words of one of the greatest of modern preachers, Adolphe Monod; words in his sermon entitled, *Dieu démandant le cœur à l'Homme*:—

"No other religion presents anything which re-

sembles this invitation to give God the heart. Give me thy observances, says the God of Pharisaism. Give me thy personality, says the God of Hegel. Give me thy reason, says the God of Kant. . . . It remains for the God of Jesus Christ to say, Give me thy heart. . . . He makes it the essence and the glory of His doctrine. With Him, to give the heart to God is not merely an obligation of piety; it is its root, its beginning, its middle, and its end."

"Am I dear to you?" Such was the question put by Jesus to Peter, on the shore, by the fire, in the presence of Peter's six listening friends—a question altogether of the heart, the inner heart, not of the outer act. Let us sit reverently down beside the Apostle, and humbly put ourselves also in the line of that question. Do not ask others whether they think you love Christ. Let Christ ask you. Friends will be very kind; and so will the Lord Jesus be. Only, He will be omniscient also, and will not for a moment mistake act for motive, hand for heart. When He puts the question, we shall have to reply with Peter, *Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest*—what shall it be?—*that I love Thee?* Why should it not be so? If you love, not worthily (that is impossible) but really, you may surely *know* it. And why not love

really? Nothing can prevent it but blindness to what Jesus Christ is, oblivion of what Jesus Christ is and does for you.

Oh, sweet it is to know, most simply, that the soul loves Him; not indeed as it should love Him, and not "more than these," with a glance of self-consciousness around; but that indeed it does love Him.

"*Jesus and the Resurrection.*"

"Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour."
*Phil.* iii. 20.

## The Ascension

The faith of the Ascension is meant to tell upon our life, with the operative touch of gentle but omnipotent hands. It is for urgent practical purposes that St. Paul here commands his converts to look up and recollect their citizenship above, and their hope of the glorification of the body. And do not we need that divine antidote to-day? We live in a period whose most formidable peril lies in the degradation of ideals—the ideals of duty, of self respect, of self discipline, of self sacrifice, of reverence, of home. To meet that risk we need strong positive habits of thought, upwards and towards the Sun. Accustom yourself then to the habitual influence of the ascended and promised Christ, cultivated in your inmost life. So you shall, almost without knowing it, overcome world, flesh, and devil, assimilating their Divine Overcomer into yourself.

# ASCENSION DAY

*"This same Jesus."*—Acts i. 11

WHILE drawn across the zenith heaven
the white cloud linger'd yet,
And rapt and silent gazed the Eleven
from darkening Olivet,
All sudden stood beside them there
two snowy-vestured Men,
And, "*This same Jesus*," said the pair, "*shall so
return again.*"

With joy they greet the angelic news, with songs
the twilight fill:—
Come, Faith and Memory, wake and muse on the
same solemn hill.
Old is that promise now; the years have circled far
since then;
The face of earth renew'd appears, renew'd the face
of men;
Since then the shifting oceans roll restrain'd by
other bars,
And glide around another pole the never setting stars.

Yet the high pledges that we prize still unrevoked
remain;
Yet this same Jesus from yon skies shall so return
again.

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The days are evil; love grows cold; new thoughts
and wisdom strange
Bear hard to break our spirit's hold on Him that
cannot change.
"Where is His promise of return?" demands the
alien throng;
And they who trust Him oft must mourn, "How
long, O Lord, how long?
Say, wilt Thou fail? Are hope and love for ever
now deferr'd?
Wilt Thou not rend the veil above, seen yet again,
and heard?

"We trusted to behold Thy face as man beholds
his friend;
To hear Thy very voice of grace, at Thy dear feet
to bend.
Was this a parable? a dream? Some figurative
birth
Of human change? some date supreme of progress
wrought on earth?

No promised Lord, whom man once saw? nought
but some vast event,
Some gradual self-working law in vague embodi-
ment?
And hath He thus indeed return'd, and we knew
not the while,
Whose hearts for Him within us burn'd, who long'd
to see His smile?"

Cold, treacherous thoughts! We faint, we weep;
yet hear the angelic strain:
"Jesus, the same, from yon blue deep, shall so re-
turn again."

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Far distant now, for age on age has roll'd its lines
between,
Shines on the evangelic page each fair recorded
scene;
Far off the Galilean home of those young, sinless
years;
Far off the deep lake's sudden foam and rescued
mariners;
The field of Sychar, where the ray of noontide lit
the well,
And Cana's humble marriage-day, and private
miracle;

The glens of Sidon, where prevail'd a mother's
dauntless faith;
The cavern grave where heard and quail'd the four
days' victor, death;
The Paschal Board at twilight spread; the chair of
Roman doom;
The clouded Cross; the thorn-crown'd Head; the
seal'd and broken tomb.

Aye, distant all appears—so long the march of
years since then,
So vast the intervening throng of lives and deaths
of men.
But when from out His secret place returns again
the Lord,
When yet again His form, His face, below shall be
restored,
Then present will be all the past, the vanish'd will
be seen,
In Him who is the First and Last, the Man, the
Nazarene.

When Thou, dear Lord, on yonder cloud Thy
blessed feet shall set,
And gather there Thy ransom'd crowd, as once on
Olivet;

When at the last each deathless saint shall see Thee
eye to eye,
Thyself beheld, without restraint, in final certainty;
When dreams and doubtings all dismay'd at Thine
own glance shall flee,
And Promise ev'n and Scripture fade, for all shall
sink in Thee;
When thought shall rest entranced, and give the
being up to love;
What then the joy to mount and live with Thee,
reveal'd, above!

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Come Saviour, quickly come; 'tis night; our souls
for morning yearn;
Long since the cloud received Thy flight; yea—so
again return!

"*Prayers and Promises.*"

# THE SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY

*"And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."*—St. Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

"BUT as far as Bethany;" there "He blessed them," and there "He was parted from them." What a beautiful collocation—the home of Martha and Mary, and the Lord's Ascension into Heaven! Truly He was "true to the kindred points of Heaven and Home." Bethany was a dear place to Him, because of the sanctified human affections which gathered round and settled in it; and now He makes it His last stage on the way upward. However distant they may be in region, a sanctified home and a glorious Heaven are close together in the plan of God.

The Lord's last ministerial deed was one of blessing; and His blessings are not mere formulas but actual impartations of spiritual gifts. In the very act of

going away He displays Himself as the Giver of all the blessings which we have "in heavenly places in Him."

"They worshipped Him." As St. Thomas a few short weeks before had fallen down before Him, and cried, "My Lord and my God"; and as the answer of the Lord then was in words implying only that he should have uttered that confession sooner; so now they give, so now He accepts, this solemn token of divine honour. And what the disciples did as they looked up after the ascending Saviour was done by all the heavenly host as they gazed on the Saviour ascended; so the Seer tells us, in Rev. v. The Apostles were but reflecting the worship of Heaven on the hill of Bethany.

Observe the results of this wonderful scene on their own souls. What a farewell it was for them! Everything, surely, would look blank and dark to them after the departure of Jesus. For it *was* a departure; "I depart," He had said; and though the Holy Spirit was promised to come to them, as "another Comforter," the blessed visible Body of their King at that moment left the earth, for them, for ever. The absence of Jesus from sight had already begun to be the law of experience for His people; from that moment the Apostles had to forego the presence of which they had enjoyed the ineffable reality as they walked in Galilee; and they might well have felt bewildered

at first and oppressed by the blank and the change. But no; they waited only for the radiant word of promise from angel lips, recorded in Acts i., and then "returned to Jerusalem with great joy," and there were "continually praising and blessing God."

What a lesson for us is this "great joy" at the Lord's farewell! If it was possible for them to look on His withdrawal out of sight as linked with joy, not sorrow, so with us, here and now, it may be even the same. What were the elements of their joy? First, surely, a loving gladness at the certainty of their Master's triumph; a worshipping, unselfish happiness in His exaltation. The Saviour of sinners had done with the sorrows of His pilgrimage. There would be no more agony and tears for Him, no more Cross and grave. He was gone to sit on His Father's throne; "in all things" He was now, and for ever, to "have the pre-eminence."

Let us seek, not artificially to force such feelings into our minds, for we cannot do it, but spiritually to drink in what will beget them. Let us draw close to the Lord Jesus Christ in heart and mind. We only need to know Him better to enter into that apostolic experience, of returning to Jerusalem with great joy.

But in their joy there was a view also towards their own spiritual gain. All existence was gloriously altered now to them by the triumph of their King. To be

sure, they would soon have trial, difficulty, persecution, to encounter; but all would be met now in the power of their Lord, who was exalted for ever for them. A transfiguration of everything around had taken place; because their Jesus, though out of sight, was eternally Conqueror, and was all in all for them.

What mattered it that for a few short years they had to do without the physical sight of His face? Soul-sight is a better thing than eyesight. They had seen, once for all, what Christ Jesus is; faith carried on that sight, inwardly, through all their days. And we too may see Him thus, and as truly. We may have just that soul-sight of the glory of God which shall make us, with a profound reality, *glad* in Him; stepping out of ourselves into the region where great joy dwells, and where we therefore may dwell with great joy.

His Kingdom had already begun on that Ascension Day; all His future triumphs would only bring out the fact.

So the disciples, gazing upward, were ready for the angels' message that "this same Jesus, in like manner, should come again." Their happiness was lodged altogether out of themselves; it was "hidden with Christ in God." And Christ is in God to-day, and our life to-day is with Him there, and therefore our joy also, to-day, may be a "great joy" in Him.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

"I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Giver of Life."

*Nicene Creed.*

# Whitsunday

The divine Subject of this great Festival is the blessed Spirit of Truth. The Scriptures amply prove that this wonderful Power is, in the sublimest sense, *a Person*, who, with free and loving will, exercises positive influence upon the soul of man. Multitudes of Christians lose grievously by forgetting this. They think of the Holy Spirit as of It, not HIM, and so He and His work become to them dim and distant: they do not deal with Him as He is, living and loving.

Come, Holy Comforter, celestial Light,
Relieve from all obscurity our sight;
Come, Holy Comforter, celestial Fire,
Our souls with love and purity inspire;
Hear, Holy Ghost, our supplicating cry,
Nor leave the grace Thou gav'st to droop and die.

Come, Holy Comforter, the Saviour's love
Reveal, and fix our hearts on joys above;
Come, Holy Comforter, the flesh subdue,
And aid us, one with Christ, His will to do;
Hear, Holy Ghost, our supplicating cry,
Nor leave the grace Thou gav'st to droop and die.

HENRY MOULE.

# WHITSUNDAY

*"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."*—Rom. v. 5.

SOMEWHAT more literally we may read; "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by means of the Holy Ghost which was given to us."

i. "*The Love of God*": that is to say, the love felt by God towards man, the personal affection of the Almighty. His "marvellous loving-kindness," as the Psalmist has it; the tenderness and endearment of Him who is Love towards us sinners, towards us who have fled from ourselves to Him, and "laid hold on His strength, and made peace with Him" in His own way — this is the particular reference here of "the love of God."

ii. "The love of God is *shed abroad*," or, more literally, "*hath been poured out*," "in our hearts." The phrase is beautifully vivid. You cannot take it to pieces, and analyse it, and explain the process, but you can know what it means. To these human

hearts of ours, deep in these living, heaving, conscious worlds within, in the very "springs of thought, and will," and affection, there can be somehow granted the view of this love as a fact, the sense and grasp of this love as a possession. It is there, poured out. It is no alien and separable insertion. It is poured out. Like the shower from the soft cloud, like the odour from the flower, it is there; shed abroad; suffused, pervading, changing, beautifying, glorifying all.

Manifestly it was not so once. These hearts were once as little possessed of this wonderful outpouring as the brown field in the year of drought is possessed of the genial rain. The "outpouring" is now within, it is in the depths; but it was from above; "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

iii. Now in order we come to the glory of Whitsunday. We name the name of that ever-blessed Agent by whom, in the heart's depths, this work is done, this love poured out, this Lord revealed and introduced: "*By the Holy Ghost.*"

To-day is Pentecost, the memorial of that great hour of the Eternal Spirit when He came indeed, and behold, that small primeval Church, in the supernatural strength of the joy of the Lord, the joy which bursts radiant forth from the love of the Lord, arose and shook the world, and brought it such a

blessing as it had never known before. To-day the Church spreads out before us, large and full, the truth of God about His Spirit. We are made to hear to-day of His great work of visible and public power, when the wind blew from the very Throne, and the fiery tongues were showered from the seven Lamps that burn before it. And we are made to hear also, in our appointed Scriptures, of His personal, separate, secret work of heavenly grace in the individual soul; of the Comforter's dealing with the man so that the Father and the Son come to him, and make Their abode with him; of the Spirit's precious "fruit" of pure and gracious holiness; of the infinite necessity of His special presence in us; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

Manifold are His gifts, His works. Vast indeed is the importance to our life and peace of clear views of what He is. It is blessed to know that indeed it is *He*, not only it; that He is no mere gale of power, no mysterious "somewhat" of effluence and influence, but the personal Friend and Lord, coming to His temples, to bless them with His own loving gifts of life, of purity, of power. But for this one time of meditation take this one sacred fact about Him, this one side and aspect of the mighty range of His glory and His operation. Think of Him as the

eternal personal Worker *and Teacher*, understanding, handling, penetrating, knowing His own way in that heart of yours, and taking his own way to bless it. Recollect Him as somehow able, in His personal action, to make the cold, indifferent, sinful soul see, and apprehend, and know, and embrace, and answer to, the love of God—the inner love of God. Remember Him as personally able to manipulate that once rebellious will; sometimes by insensible degrees, sometimes by decisive convictions and a crisis of change memorable to you for ever and ever. Behold Him; He is the Convincer, bringing home to us—home, indeed—"sin, and righteousness, and judgement." He is the Revealer; He unveils Christ, He explains Him, and glorifies Him, and applies Him as vital balm to the aching spirit which in the reality of its "exceeding need" applies itself to Christ. Then does the man, this man of like passions with us, receive in his heart the effusion of the eternal Love. He knows it and believes it. The pardon, the more than pardon, he knows it now; it is a fact, for Jesus Christ is a fact indeed to him. He sees with a new intuition now something of his Lord's glorious beauty. He finds in genuine operation the power of His Lord's presence in him, its power to subdue iniquity, to annul the tempter's besetting strength, to make it sweet and pleasant to do "from the soul" the will

of God; studying to please Him who, in His astonishing love, cares that we sinners should love Him. Yes, the Spirit works, deep at the centre, and so Christ, in whom is the whole love of God, becomes there "a living bright reality," a joy unspeakable, the Secret of the eternal Heart.

"*The Secret of the Presence.*"

## WHIT MONDAY

WE who believe indeed in the Lord Jesus Christ know on the evidence of God's Word that we owe our saving faith to the Lord the Spirit, "the Spirit of faith." We who were once "dead in trespasses and sins," and who now live, know on the same evidence that we were, in "abundant mercy," "born of the Spirit," and that every step which we take in that life we take "by the Spirit." Is the "sound" of regenerate vitality and action "heard," in however small a whisper, yet *audibly*, in our souls and in the outward life which manifests their condition? It is the blessed Spirit's presence in special grace. It is the evidence, the one evidence, of our real new birth, new creation, by Him. I say, it is the one evidence of this. For let us remember that across all the problems of sacramental operation we must read always those words of our Lord about the mystic Wind. Wherever that Wind is, yes, wherever it is, by its very nature as wind *it moves*; it is not merely latent; it

is heard; "Thou hearest the sound thereof; *so is every one* that is born of the Spirit" (St. John iii. 8). But on this I do not linger now. Our concern now is with the experiences of the life of grace in Christ, and their connexion with the personal working of the Spirit. Accordingly, "in the sanctification of the Spirit," that is to say in His whole work of our separation to God, we were by Him at first brought through conviction "unto obedience to, and blood-sprinkling of, Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 2). And when the last step of the blessed process shall come, and we shall rise transfigured from the grave, possessing "the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body," it will still and for ever be "because of the Spirit that dwelleth in us" (Rom. viii. 11). Between this Alpha and this Omega of our personal salvation all is of "the same Spirit." Does the peaceful power of grace pervade our regenerate being, and claim effectually for our Lord all we are and all we have, and bring spirit, soul, and body into a delightful captivity and bond-service to our Head and Possessor? It is "the fulness of the Spirit." Do we in truth breath "the Abba, that prayer of faith alone"? It is the Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of God's Son, in our hearts. Do we pray in truth the prayer of holy faith and love, the prayer that asks according to His will? It is "in the Holy Ghost," it is "the

Spirit making intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26). Do "we wait by faith for the hope of righteousness," the glory reserved for the justified? It is "by the Spirit" (Gal. v. 5). Does "Christ dwell in our hearts by faith"? (Eph. iii. 7). It is because the Spirit has "strengthened us with might in our inner man."

"*Veni Creator.*"

## WHIT TUESDAY

HE Holy Spirit, as our Communion Creed confesses, is "the Life-Giver," the Maker-alive. But what is the *Life* which He gives, with which He works? I listen, and I hear another Voice, which is yet as if also His; and it says, "I am the Life." "The Life Eternal is in the Son"; "he that hath the Son hath the Life" (1 John v. 11, 12). I read these great, these blessed words in the light of what we have recollected of the Holy Spirit's work on and in the Holy Son of Man; and I thus see in them a remembrance that what the Spirit does in His free and all-powerful work in the soul which He quickens into second life is, above all things, to bring it into contact with the Son. He roots it, He grafts it, He embodies it, into the Son. He deals so with it that there is a continuity, wholly spiritual indeed, but none the less most real, unfigurative, and efficacious, between the Head and the limb, between the branch and the Root. He effects an influx into the regenerate man of the holy

virtues of the nature of the Second Adam, an infusion of the exalted life of Jesus Christ, through an open duct, living and divine, into the man who is born again into Him, the incarnate and glorified Son of God. I see on the one hand the Spirit poured without measure upon the Head. I see Him, on the other hand, not independently of that Head, but in deepest relation to Him and union with Him, pouring Himself richly into the member. I see Him the divine Factor in the becoming and being of the Manhood of the Second Adam. I see Him equally the divine Factor in the new creation of the sinner into a true child of God, a true regenerate member of the new race. And all this combines to remind me that the sacred process all the while has Jesus Christ for its inmost Secret. What does the Holy Life-Giver impart, infuse, develop? What is my Life Eternal in the last analysis? Not Himself, the great Worker and Conveyer, but my incarnate, sacrificed, and glorified Redeemer and Head. The Spirit pours into me HIM, to be my Eternal Life for deliverance, for victory, for peace, for service, as truly as He, the same Saviour, is my pardon and righteousness in His once-wrought propitiation.

The Life-Giver is the Giver of Christ who is our Life. "*Veni Creator.*"

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

*Rev. iv. 8.*

# Trinity Sunday

Almighty Father, Father of the Eternal Son, Giver of the Eternal Spirit, receive our humble worship this day. We adore the mystery of the Three in One. We bless Thee for the revelation of the eternal Trinity, and, we pray Thee, keep us steadfast in that faith. We rejoice in our Almighty Saviour and in our Almighty Converter and Comforter, One with Thee in Nature and in Will. O Eternal Fountain, from whom eternally Godhead floweth in the bright abyss of Triunal glory, we praise Thee, we worship Thee, with Thy Son and with Thy Spirit, one God of our salvation, one God of love. Yea, Thou art Love in Thine own inner eternity, where the Father loveth the Son. Therefore art Thou Love in Thy going forth to create, and to redeem, and to make blessed. So to Thee, O heavenly Father, with our Redeemer and our Sanctifier, be glory now, and in the life to come. Amen.

# TRINITY SUNDAY

*"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."*—Rev. xxii. 1.

THIS passage shows forth the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in glorious life and action. We see in picture before us a Throne, and two Persons upon it, and a River of Water of Life proceeding out of it. "This spake He of the Spirit." Here, in this last glowing book of the Bible, where the very scenery of Heaven opens before our eyes, here we have the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit proceeding forth from Them.

The doctrine of the Trinity, with all its mystery, is after all only the putting together, the outcome, of some of the great facts of the Word of God.

The uncaused, self-existent Eternal is indeed One, One God. But within the bright shrine and sanctuary of Godhead there is *more-than-Oneness*. Deity is no bright solitude, but the Scene of mutual affection.

Deity contains for ever the mighty flow and movement of an infinite Life of responding, interacting Love.

The words "God is Love" get a bright illumination from this doctrine; for how divine is the light that falls upon every *stream* which has its source in such an *ocean-fountain* as the love of God for God!

The teaching of our text, though its context refers to heaven and immortality, is not confined to it. For grace is but the shadow and the germ of glory; there is no blessedness of the heavenly world but has its counterpart on earth. Later in this chapter the longing and thirsty soul, "whosoever will," is invited even here and now to drink of the "water of life, freely."

So whatever be this eternal River which flows from the Throne of God, it has its rills and offshoots here below, from which we may drink. So we not only slake our thirst, but we do so by partaking of the very life of Heaven.

The Throne is "the Throne of God and of *the Lamb*"; yes, of the Lamb of Calvary, the Lamb that was slain. It is a fact never forgotten in Heaven that He has been *slain*. Then let His redeemed on earth never forget it. Let your allegiance to your Master be marked with the blood of the Cross, always and everywhere. And this once slain and now exalted

Lord, whose favoured subjects we are, and who from another point of view is our great Elder Brother, He, with the Eternal Father, the First and Second Persons of the Holy Trinity, He is *on the Throne*. The Third Person, the Holy Spirit, figured out in this passage in His glorious capacity as Life-Giver, "proceedeth out of" it. From the depths of the Throne, from the inner secrets of the life of God, from which only God can come, He comes, the Stream of Living Water.

So His eternal origin, His union with the Father and the Son, and also His work, which is to glorify the Father and the Son, are all pictured here. We will not with our finite thought attempt to trace further the infinite mystery of the Triune Godhead. But let us walk down the River that proceeds out of the Throne; let us see the trees of healing on either side of it; and whosoever is athirst, let him take of the water of life freely—that is to say, to render the Greek exactly, "let him take it *gratis*," "for nothing."

What does this mean? It means the work of obedient faith; it means the taking the Giver at His word. To believe is not merely the path to reception; it *is* reception. The Lord of love offers to each one of us to be partaker of the Holy Ghost: yes, to the soul that is most weary with failure, to

the existence that seems to have least to look back upon, and nothing to look forward to. The Holy Ghost is the power which can meet the need of the weak and weary spirit, the tempted and fallen will; which can take and make all things new, and can prove indeed the Life-Giver by uniting man to Jesus Christ—for salvation, for service, for life, and for death.

The River leads to the Throne. What a restful, immovable "dwelling-place" for those who have made their God their refuge and their Home!

Heaven is a place with *a Throne* in it. The very essence of its life will be an everlasting surrender and loyalty to its King. There will be no self-seeking, no self-dependence, in Heaven. There will be no rivalries there; for "His servants shall" all "serve Him." From one point of view it will be a life of eternal manhood and maturity; from another, a life of eternal youth and childhood.

But for those whose hope is set on such a future there must be a present germ of it here and now; a life on earth in which the Throne of God is set up in the heart, and the life of the Spirit flowing from the Throne into all the inner world.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*
—PHIL. iv. 13.

OMPARE with this text the last chapter of Joshua. There the Israelites were undertaking, with a light heart, to "serve the Lord." Joshua, who had been on Sinai with Moses, understood more of the holiness of God, and—looking from their own point of view—he warned them, not that they should not but that they *could* not do it! It is a dangerous fallacy to say absolutely that what we cannot do we are not bound to do. But it is a valuable lesson in the process of discovering the abilities of grace to learn, low in the dust, something of our own disabilities. "You *cannot*," said Joshua to those who were taking easy views of God's requirements. And it was the warning fitted to their need.

But here in our text is the voice not of Joshua

to the careless, but of St. Paul to the believing. He is writing of what we may do in union with the Lord. And what does he say? "I can do all things," I can walk and please God, I can be more than conqueror, I can quench *all* the fiery darts of the wicked one, "in Him that strengtheneth me."

"I can do all things." What does this mean? Certainly not that I am omnipotent. St. Paul was as little able to open the door of his Roman prison as if he had been a heathen criminal. He was just as little able, by any supposed drawing on divine strength, to do anything *outside the path of duty*, as he was before he knew Christ.

What then do the words mean? Consult this same Epistle to the Philippians; it shows us some noteworthy specimens of the "all things" which, in his Lord, St. Paul could do. We find there, first, that he had a sufficiency of strength to enable him cheerfully to suffer the disappointments and privations which darkened his path. His soul, an eagle-winged soul, was shut up in the cage of a Roman prison. And there he was tried severely in patience and in temper (and St. Paul was "a man of like passions" with ourselves) by hearing of the unkindly doings of those who perversely sought to "add to his afflictions" even in their preaching of Christ; but his "all sufficiency" expressed itself

in the meek acceptance of their adverse action as a part of the will of God. Again, his life or death hung on a caprice of the imperial despot who for long months, apparently, did not take the trouble to arrive at a judgement; and it was not easy, under such conditions, to enjoy perfect peace. But St. Paul enjoyed it. Throughout the whole Epistle we find a spirit of deep calm, though it was written by a man who did not know but that within a week he might be led out to a violent and unjust death.

When St. Paul speaks thus about his own resources for life, and labour, and victory over sin, he would say to us to-day, "What is for me, is for you. Come with me to the Fountain, and, whether you bring to it a vessel great or small, that vessel will be filled." And why? Because the Lord in whom St. Paul lived, and from whom he drew his ability to do and to bear, is the same Lord here, and for us; able and willing still to be the peace and power of the humblest of His people. He can be the secret of spiritual success for the domestic servant, for the Sunday School teacher, for the man of business, for the man of toil, for the victim of pain; the same in a life of large publicity, the same in the deep privacy of home; in any and in every sphere to which He may have called us.

## The First Sunday after Trinity

In the Gospel of Christ we find, in perfect harmony, the principles of Heaven working themselves out in the practice of earth. It is the Gospel of eternal grace which heals the plague of the tongue, which takes out of home-life its friction, and brightens its hearth, and trims its lamp. Yes, all goes well when Jesus Christ who *strengthens* is allowed to be Jesus Christ who *rules*. St. Paul's secret in the Roman prison eighteen centuries ago is the secret of English men and women in our common life to-day, in the busiest life, and in what looks the earthliest.

To do it we must be "in Him." Make sure of your spiritual connexion with Jesus Christ; keep in living contact with Him; take pains over it; watch over it. Then you need not fear. Then will the words of the hymn be translated into a happy and brightening experience; you will have "Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties press'd"; "sufficiency for all things" of God's will, "in Him who gives you power."

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"The Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might."*—JUDGES vi. 14.

THE history of Gideon is one of the most striking pictures in the whole Old Testament. As a study of natural character, Gideon is deeply interesting; one of those many personalities shewn in Scripture full of individual and minute consistency, and marked by traits of weakness as well as strength, which proclaim themselves to be — not composed pictures but photographs from life.

Gideon is everywhere the same character. It is not too much to say that this man, called to so mighty a work, and enabled for it, was not naturally strong: an unlikely instrument, as we should say, for the terribly difficult work that had to be done for Israel. Gideon was no man of iron. If I do not mistake, he was the man of all others to look

back in a melancholy way and contrast a dreadful present with a glorious past. He would feel that it was too late; things had sunk too low; circumstances were too much for him; he must drift with the tide. Had he not a strong temptation to such thoughts? Would not you and I have had them had we lived there and then? Think of only one fact of the time. It was a capital crime at Ophrah, we find, to cut down the altar and the idol! But it was a capital crime by the law of the God of Israel to have anything to do with such an altar and such an idol! So awfully far had the Lord's people gone on the downward path, so deep had they sunk into spiritual death; turning His statutes thus literally upside down. And meantime, in flowed the wild deluge of their savage pagan enemies like the sea through a broken dyke—"the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the children of the East." At such a moment the Lord took up and fashioned as an instrument for His use just this man, and turned him who was by nature the victim of his surroundings into an instance of glorious strength perfected in weakness.

Is there anything in all this that comes quite home to my friend the reader? Are you at all "discouraged because of the way," or because "the days are evil"? Disheartened friend, Gideon

has a special message to you. Listen, and let him speak it out.

i. He tells you that God can "say to the weak *be strong*." He can make you strong just at your weakest points. That indolent habit, that rough or peevish temper, that imagination so prone to wander in doubtful or forbidden regions, that entangling love of the world, so different from an unselfish interest in all around you—the Lord can take away all these things, and can somehow say to you as He said to Gideon, "Go in this thy might."

ii. He tells you that, as with character, so with circumstances, God can deal. We have each our Midianites. We have fightings without and fears within. We have difficulties to-day, due perhaps to our mistakes and follies of yesterday. We have, it may be, very real sorrows, very real cares, for others. Anywise, we have the threefold host of the world, the flesh, and the devil, to deal with as we go. But *in spite of circumstances* the Lord said to Gideon, "Go in this thy might." And He says it now to you.

Now, what was it which made this weak man strong? God answers the question, and answers it for you, discouraged friend, in the story of the Oak of Ophrah. It was the Look of God.

There stooped Gideon, threshing the wheat in the winepress; and there sat under the oak One watching him in his weakness and his gloom. His Master's mighty, loving eyes are upon him, though he knows it not. Even so now, Christ is present before yet Christ is seen.

"The Angel" speaks again, and not only speaks but *looks* upon the man. It was a transfiguration for the soul of the disheartened Gideon. There was that in the look which conveyed to him even more than the outward message in the words.

What made Gideon strong? It was only this, that he was drawn in his weakness to forget himself in the strength of God. Hitherto he had, in a sense and in a measure, been faithful, but he had not yet come into a magnetic contact, if I may use the word, with JEHOVAH'S life and power. Now the look and the word drew him into this, and Gideon was so gifted now with a power not his own that he became, weak as he was, the vehicle of the Almighty. Note the literal Hebrew given us in the margin, just below (v. 34): "The Spirit of the Lord *clothed Itself with Gideon.*" Amazing phrase! But such things happen still in the sphere of spiritual strength and victory. It was so with St. Paul in later days:

## The Second Sunday after Trinity

"When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10). It can be so with you, with me. Just where you are, and as just what you are, the Lord looks on you, and bids you look on Him. He will lift you out of the sore entanglement by the magic power of His presence, of His look.

"*Need and Fulness.*"

# THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."*—1 Pet. v. 9.

IF you examine this passage of St. Peter you will find that the connexion is most important. It has to do with the great living enemy of man, "your adversary the Devil." It tells us that for the Lord Jesus and His Apostles man's great enemy was indeed a person. Many would persuade us otherwise now, as if "the Devil" were but a figure of speech, a personification of evil. But if so, Scripture is mistaken; and in this, as in other things of the soul, to agree with the Holy Book is the deepest wisdom in the end.

To remember that the enemy is personal is a powerful means of compelling the soul to fly to nothing less than the personal almighty Friend.

St. Peter tells his converts of abundant danger from

themselves and from the world; but he does not let them forget the third member of the unholy alliance, our enemy the Devil. He reminds them that they are not only surrounded by an army, but that that army has a general, who knows how to throw his forces on to the weak point, how to make the evil do its work. And for them, as for us, the only perfect victory was to be won by casting themselves on Him who is "stronger than the strong."

"Whom *resist*." Such is his bold appeal. In one sense they were to be utterly afraid, afraid of themselves, afraid of their own weakness. But they were not to be afraid when that weakness was hidden in their almighty Friend. "In God we shall do great acts."

But how could they resist? "*Steadfast in your faith*"; so, rightly, reads the Revised Version. And the word rendered "steadfast" means, precisely, "solid." The thought is of a resistance in which there shall lurk *nothing hollow*; which shall be genuine through and through, a phalanx of rock breaking the waves of all attack. And this was to be thus "in your faith," that is to say, your believing; "in" or "by" the secret of a true reliance on your Lord. In other words, the victory lies in Jesus Christ, and is to be made yours by Him: calling Him in, committing your

soul to Him, telling Him all—so shall you overcome. The foothold for resistance is a trusted Christ; the weapon for resistance is a trusted Christ; not by self against self, but by Christ used and trusted, is the victory to be won.

> "In thy weakness, in thy peril,
> Raise to heaven a trustful call;
> Strength and calm for every crisis
> Come in telling Jesus all."

But now look at the latter part of the verse. Here the Apostle turns to another aspect of the matter; to the encouraging fact that in this conflict, with Christ for our weapon, we are not alone. All over the world where He is loved and followed we have "brethren," exposed to the same trials and dangers, and they are winning victories of precisely the kind which we long to win. See the words as they stand: "Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." And note the margin of the Revised Version, where you read that they "are *being accomplished*," that is, are on the way to completion. Observe, further, that the word rendered "accomplished" is not a mere expression for "are taking place," "are being experienced." It means that these afflictions are being *carried to their purposed end, directed upon their goal.* Yes, remember, O Christian

soul, whatever "affliction" may lie just now upon you, some one else, somewhere else, is bearing the like, and Christ the Lord is "carrying it out" in that person to a glorious "end."

What a brotherhood is here suggested to our thought! It was large in St. Peter's day. It is vastly larger now. From every region now we hear of "the brethren that are in the world." "Afflictions" are "being accomplished," and God is being glorified, in every race and tongue of man, from the Fuegian, once thought by the scientific visitor to be only half human, to the noblest specimens of the most cultured races of Europe and of Asia. From every quarter come voices testifying that the enemy is indeed around us, but that the Lord is within us; our "afflictions are being carried out" to their perfect end; they are occasions for knowing Him better now; they are preparations for enjoying Him for ever more perfectly hereafter.

So let us resist. If we are not merely drifting with the tide, let us be encouraged by this message of God's Word: let us use this mighty secret against a mighty, but not almighty, foe. From sorrow, from temptation, from failure, it bids us look up and look around; up to Jesus Christ, to call Him ever in; around, on the thousands and thousands

of "the brethren that are in the world," men who are being by Him made strong out of weakness, and who with us one day shall gather round the great Elder Brother, to bless Him for what He, in us, here below, did in treading down the enemy.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Rev. xxii. 1–5.

THIS passage is a revelation of the life of the blessed ones in the glory above. And a counterpart of it is to be always found in the life of grace below.

There is no truth revealed to us about Heaven that has not its germ and counterpart here, its reflection from heaven upon earth, in the Christian's present course.

Our text here tells us of provision for that heavenly life—the river for thirst, the fruit for food; and it tells us of that life's condition too. It is a life with a Throne in the midst, "the Throne of God and of the Lamb"; a life in which "His bondservants serve Him"; a life in which we shall "see His face"; a life in which "His name is on our foreheads"; a "life without night," and all that night signifies; a life in which we shall "reign for ever and ever"—

yes, with a royalty all the more real and triumphant because the kings are bondservants, first and always, to their God.

Now note the counterpart; what are the characteristics of a true Christian, on his pilgrimage?

i. His is a life with a Throne over it. Above, there is one eternal Monarchy in the community of the Blessed; they live, and move, and have their being in the shadow and the light of the absolute Throne. Even so here, the Christian life is lived, day and night, hour and minute, under the shadow and the light of the Throne of a royal Christ. Now as then, here as there, His bondservant serves Him; purchased, conquered, and also yielded up of his own will, he *serves* for ever. The Greek rendered here, "shall serve Him," implies the service of adoration. And as in heaven, so on earth, the life of the servant of God is a life of "reverence and godly fear."

ii. The heavenly life is a life of sight; "they shall see His face." Yes, and this also has its answering experience below. "If we walk in the light" (1 John i. 7), if there is no cloud between, it is our present privilege to "behold the glory of the Lord," to stand in peace and simplicity before Him, and in some merciful measure to see into His love and will.

iii. Then further, "His name on their foreheads"

there. Yes, and on the Christian's life, here in this mortal tabernacle, is to be written, "Holiness to the Lord." All our ambitions and our aims are to be according to His mind. Our life is to be clear as day in purity of aspiration and endeavour. The *family likeness* is to begin to be developed here.

iv. Yonder, again, there is no secondary illumination, no sun nor moon; God is their Sun, and the Lamb is their Light. So now, in the spiritual sphere, there "*need be no night*" in the Christian's life below. For him there shines even now an inner sun, making always an inner light, the light of the peace of God.

v. Yet further, the heavenly life is a life of royalty and reigning. We do not know what this will mean in detail in the world to come, but we can know what its counterpart should mean to-day:

> "'Tis His grace His people raises
> Over self to reign as kings."

A "reigning" life, in the Christian's experience, is one in which the man has dominion over temptation instead of being its slave, and "walks at liberty, keeping His commandments."

Such, in the grace of God, is meant to be the experience of day by day under the practical conditions of our "life in the flesh." How can this life be

lived? It is a beautiful picture; but is it not disheartening too? Shall I, who so often fail, who seem to myself the very proverb of weakness, ever hope to be thus a conqueror? But our chapter opens with the description of what is to be the provision and sustenance for the heavenly life; and the counterpart holds good here also.

Behold, the River of Life! That is to say, the Holy Ghost, poured for ever through the being of the glorified. In some way utterly unimaginable, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity will have infinitely much to do, for ever, with the fulness of the life of Heaven. But even so, in gracious and real measure, it is to be on earth. Let not the truth of the Holy Ghost be a "forgotten truth" to you, Christian man, ambitious of a true life in God. "He that believeth on me," saith the Lord (St. John vii. 37), "out of him shall flow rivers of living water." There is intended to be such a flowing fulness of divine grace in our lives that it must needs overflow to others; and this, not from great saints only, but from all "them that believe on His name."

As with the water of Heaven, so with its food. The Tree of Life there blooms and bears, perennial in the sustenance it provides, yielding its twelvefold fruits through the year of eternity. But again, that

fruit is brought forth also for the pilgrim's strength in his mortality. Christ is the food of His people, here and now; not only our sacrifice of peace, but also our very life, "the food that weary pilgrims love," on their way to the eternal country.

Above, they find always that fruit in its season; the holy trees "yield their fruit" every month. There is no winter and starvation in that year, no decline or going off in that blessed life. Even so here also. We never need fail of our supply. Our spiritual continuance is to be perpetual, because it is sustained not by itself, not by our zeal or love, but by the fulness of the life of God, given us in His Son.

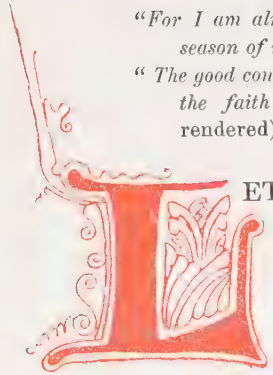
We are just about to partake of the Holy Communion. In it we shall not only commemorate our Lord, but shall eat and shall drink of Him. The Lord Himself, through His minister, will give us, as He gave the Apostles at that first Supper, the precious bread and wine which "is," to faith, His Body and His Blood. And so He will say to us upon the journey, as He will say hereafter and for ever in the country above, "Because I live ye shall live also."

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*For I am already being poured out* upon the altar, *and the season of my departure is upon me.*

"*The good contest I have wrestled out, the race I have finished, the faith I have kept.*"—2 Tim. iv. 6, 7 (literally rendered).



ET us think of these words about Christian death spoken by this great Christian, St. Paul, close to his end. They have much to say, not for an apostolic martyr only, but for us also, the rank and file of what is yet, down to its least notable genuine member, "one army of the living God."

i. "I am being poured out as a drink-offering." Such to St. Paul was his impending death. For him, to be sure, the phrase had a dread particular fitness; when his death came it would come by the sword; the red torrent would flow, like the wine of the altar bowl, drenching the holocaust, enriching the sacrificial fume. But we need not bind the whole truth of the phrase

to such a solemn literalism. Every devoted life, if it is really devoted—a word which means so much more than only devout—is a sacrifice offered on the altar of love to the God of our salvation, "a living sacrifice," as St. Paul long before (Rom. xii. 1) had called it. And when that life, devoted to the last, reaches its climax in a death full of surrender to the will of God, the blood may not literally be shed, yet spiritually the death is none the less a libation which enriches all the antecedent toil and pain. John, sinking to sleep on his bed at Ephesus, as truly "poured himself out" as Paul did when he knelt to die at the Three Fountains outside the gate of Rome. Bede, lying down after his life's long work in the cloister-school at Jarrow, "poured himself out" as truly, though in a far different way, as Huss did in the fire at Constance. To all these saints life was "a living sacrifice," *even unto death.* So their death, their last outpouring of the vital power, yielded up to their God, was the libation upon the sacrifice.

May it be ours, through our Master's grace, so to be faithful *even unto the libation.* May we, in Him, "yield to the Lord, with simple heart," not only our full energies but also "ourselves, our souls and bodies," when they are weak and worn with mortal exercise. We adore His will; and that will *may* ordain that they should be "yielded" to Him rather as passive

under pain or paralysis than as working on still, in some measure, in their decline. But however, by His grace, "the spirit shall be willing" to maintain its happy surrender even to the last—even till we "are being poured out."

ii. Then we have here another aspect of the death of the servant of the Lord: "the season of my departure is upon me." The word rendered "departure," *analusis*, is the Greek original of our "analysis." An analysis means a setting free, a detachment, a separation of things or thoughts from one another. The original noun here, like the kindred verb in Phil. i. 23, denotes the undoing of a connexion, as it were the untying of a cord, the weighing of an anchor, so as to set the voyager free to seek the further shore. To the Philippians, in that earlier day, St. Paul had owned that his "desire" was "to unmoor, and to be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23). And here the desire is about to become fact; "the season of his unmooring is upon him."

It was no light thing, we may be sure, when this realization of that desire "came" actually on. It is nature, not sin, to shrink from death *as death*. The greatest saints, in their Lord's own words (St. John xxi. 18), when they come to die, are carried *whither they would not*"; they are living men, *embodied* spirits; they would rather "not be unclothed, but clothed

upon" (2 Cor. v. 4). But then there is the glorious other side, which filled St. Paul when he wrote Phil. i. 23, and which surely rose in conquering greatness before him now. The death which in one aspect was a last sacrifice was, in another, that delightful moment when the friendly flood heaves beneath the freed keel, and the prow is set straight and finally towards the shore of *Home*, and the Pilot stands on board, at length "seen face to face." And lo, as He takes the helm, "immediately the ship is at the land whither they go" (St. John vi. 21).

. . . . . .

Two metaphors, under which St. Paul pictures his life's end, have just passed before us—the libation shed upon the altar; the boat unmoored from our mortal shore, set free to cross the narrow strait of death to the better land. Here he is metaphorical again, and the metaphors cover now not the end but the course, not martyrdom in prospect but life in retrospect. And here again, as in the previous verse, the old saint's mind goes back upon mental pictures dear in earlier days, and he sees again the struggling limbs and the swift feet of the Greek athletes. Life had long ago seemed to him to be vividly parabled by those scenes. In one great passage (1 Cor. ix. 24-27) he had developed the illustration in minute and powerful detail; the stern discipline of training,

the strict rules, the rejection which must follow an infraction, the straight eager course of the runners, the terribly purposeful blows of the boxers, the wreath of leaves, "corruptible" shadow of the amaranthine crown of the victorious Christian. Again and again, in other less conspicuous passages, he had used those familiar and eloquent associations to animate himself and his disciples to live true to the Lord, true to present grace and to coming glory. Once more here, yet once more, the *athlete of Christ* speaks the old dialect, but now with the accent of achievement and repose. He is so very near the end, so very much of the peculiar trial of his lot is for ever over, the "journeyings often," "the care of all the Churches" (2 Cor. xi. 26, 28), and so certain is his Master to love him and to uphold him over those few difficult paces before the end, that he speaks as if already off the field. Christ Jesus had enabled him so long for such a life that it was a relatively minor thing (may we not dare to say it?) to be sure that He would enable him, with a glorious adequacy, for the one last step of death.

"*The Second Epistle to Timothy.*"

# THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures."*—Ps. xxxvi. 8.

THE Collect for this Sunday is a prayer which seems to breathe and move with the thought of the heavenly love and the hope of the eternal joy. Its prayer that we may supremely love God is uttered as if by those who see heaven opened, and to whom the coming bliss is half revealed already. Let us think together, then, to-day of the offer and promise of joy, of gladness, of eternal pleasures, which God makes to the soul of man.

"Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." Yes, by that word, the marriage supper, the bridal feast—a thing meant to be so full of both actual and hoped-for happiness—the Lord sets forth the light of heaven. Heaven will be a scene of spotless holiness and eternal worship;

a "city of solemnities"; but also, and all the while, it will be an existence of vivid and innumerable pleasures, even "pleasures for evermore"—pleasures in which deep enjoyment and ardent expectation will form, as has been said, "one eternal feeling."

Let us quicken our remembrance that such is God's promise, by a few brief thoughts upon this passage of the Psalm. And may "the Lord God of the holy Prophets" reveal to us indeed, in His own way, some of the realities of these things to come.

What says the text? We may be very sure that it says what it says, ultimately, of heaven. Its words carry in them a precious truth for earth, I know. But we may be quite sure that not the Psalmist, but the Holy Ghost, has scattered words like these over the Old Testament to be read by us in the light of Christ Jesus. The full meaning given them in HIM is their final, truest meaning. And in Him "life and immortality are brought to light." The veil is rent, the gate opened, the way into eternity made plain. So now indeed to us, who have heard the word of Christ, such oracles of God as these glorious promises of the Psalms point to the eternal Home of joy.

What says, then, this heaven-revealing text?

i. "*They* shall be abundantly *satisfied*."

Forget not who are meant by "they." You see

this from the seventh verse. It is, "the children of men who put their trust under the shadow" of the eternal wings. It is those who find out the excellence, the preciousness, of God's lovingkindness. *They* shall be satisfied. They come to His shadow here; therefore shall they see His light hereafter. They come to taste His lovingkindness now; therefore shall they drink eternally of the river of His pleasures then.

Not all the children of men, alas. Would God it were so. Would God that all the souls which He has made would put their trust beneath His shadow. But do they? Do they obey Him when they hear of Him? Is it a law of nature that man sees beauty in God, to desire Him, and embrace Him, and love Him with adoring love? No, it is not. That is, it is not a law of our nature in its fall. Its law, its course, lies the other way. "The thought," the bent, "of the flesh"; "the carnal mind"; what is it, according to the Bible? It is "enmity against God."

The Bible has no absolute universal promise for all mankind. It has a universal invitation. It has a capacity to bless all that will come. But it has no promise, none, save its most faithful and merciful forewarnings, for those who "will not come to Him to have life."

But they who do come, the weary, the sinful, the desponding but awakened souls that come to God in Jesus Christ—what of them?

They find, first, the lovingkindness and the reposeful peace promised in verse 7. They find here below that the Lord is gracious; they "taste" it, to use St. Peter's forcible word — so perfectly expressive of what is soberly meant by "Christian experience." They "sit down under His shadow." Amidst sins, and doubts, and fears, they yet *have found* a refuge and a rest which the world knows not of — till it comes to try. And,

Then, secondly, beyond the veil — God says it, the God who cannot lie — they are abundantly, overflowingly "satisfied" with the richness of His everlasting House. They drink of the river of His pleasures. They are filled from His well of life. They see light in His light.

ii. "Thou shalt make them drink of *the river* of Thy pleasures."

In this powerful and beautiful expression the Bible evermore sets out the life of heaven. It tells of "the streams of water" by which the Redeemer leads His people; "the living fountains of waters" to which the Lamb conducts the great multitude before the Throne; "the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, which flows from the Throne of God

and of the Lamb." Perhaps the thought has descended from Eden; from the river which flowed from Eden into the garden of God to water it for Adam's delight. But in any case the picture of unwearying joy thus given is marvellously bright and clear.

Such is the unimaginable blessedness of heaven. Such it is in its everlasting freshness; in its undeparting brightness; in its perpetual succession, while yet it is the same. Nothing, still nothing, but joy; pleasures—not pleasure only, but "pleasures—for evermore"; an inexhaustible fountain, still pouring out what will make each sensation of the eternal life a thrill of exceeding joy.

Ah, it is easy to speak of; it is not so easy to grasp it as a living hope. Sorrow, trial, care; losses, changes, fears; the anguish of sin in the saints themselves; these things are so interwoven with our inmost life that the heart seems often unable to believe that they are not inseparable from it; that the time will really come when the children of men who have come to the Lord's shadow, who have really fled to the Lord's refuge here, will really hereafter, and for ever, experience nothing but the eternal feeling of intense and unmingled joy. Yet so it is. "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." The sufferings of the present time are not to be compared with

the "eternal and exceeding weight of glory." The servant enters not into his Master's mercy only, but into his Master's "joy." He is "presented before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

But all the joys will yet be one. All will be filled with the presence of the Lord. To all the living fountains the LAMB will lead them. To be with Him will rule and qualify the whole. "*Thou* shalt make them drink of the river of *Thy* pleasures."

Such is some faint outshadowing of the gift of God—eternal life. He indeed giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. Not one soul by that river-side but once deserved eternal death. But Jesus died, and the Spirit led to Jesus; and, to the praise of the Lamb who was slain, the sinner shall dwell securely in that eternity of joy.

And therefore it is an eternity open to "whosoever will" amongst us here this day. Each, in ourselves, we can claim only the merited exclusion. But each, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we may really come and humbly claim the promised joy. Oh come, then, whosoever thirsteth, come ye to the waters—to the river that flows from the Throne of the Lamb. Whosoever will, let him take freely, for nought, without money and without price, of the river of the water of the eternal life.

"*Fordington Sermons.*"

# THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."*—Rom. vi. 18.

THE Apostle's aim in this whole passage is to awaken his readers, with the strong, tender touch of his holy reasoning, to articulate their position to themselves. They have trusted Christ, and are in Him. Then, they have entrusted themselves altogether to Him. Then, they have, in effect, surrendered. They have consented to be His property. They are the bondservants, they are the slaves, of His Truth—that is, of Him robed and revealed in His Truth, and shining through it on them in the glory at once of His grace and of His claim. Nothing less than such an obligation is the fact for them. Let them feel, let them weigh, and then let them embrace, the chain which after all will only prove their pledge of rest and freedom.

What St. Paul thus did for our elder brethren at Rome, let him do for us of this later time.

He has appealed to the moral reason of the regenerate soul. Now he speaks straight to the will. You are, with infinite rightfulness, the bondmen of your God. You see your deed of purchase; it is the other side of your warrant of emancipation. Take it, and write your own unworthy names with joy upon it, consenting and assenting to your Owner's perfect rights. And then live out your life, keeping the autograph of your own surrender before your eyes. Live, suffer, conquer, labour, serve, as men who have themselves walked to their Master's door (Exod. xxi. 5, 6), and presented the ear to the awl which pins it to the doorway, each in his turn saying, "I will not go out free."

To such an act of the soul the Apostle calls these saints, whether they had done the like before or no. They were to sum up the perpetual fact, then and there, into a definite and critical act of thankful will. And he calls us to do the same to-day. By the grace of God, it shall be done. With eyes open, and fixed upon the face of the Master who claims us, and with hands placed helpless and willing within His hands, we will, we do, present ourselves bondservants to Him; for discipline, for servitude, for all His will.

"Is life worth living?" Yes, infinitely well worth, for the living man who has surrendered to "the Lord that bought him." Outside that ennobling captivity,

that invigorating while most genuine bondservice, the life of man is at best complicated and tired with a bewildered quest, and gives results at best abortive, matched with the ideal purposes of such a being. We "present ourselves to God," for His ends, as implements, vassals, willing bondmen; and lo, our own end is attained. Our life has settled, after its long friction, into gear. Our root, after hopeless explorations in the dust, has struck at last the stratum where the immortal water makes all things live, and grow, and put forth fruit for heaven. The heart, once dissipated between itself and the world, is now "united" to the will, to the love, of God; and understands itself, and the world, as never before; and is able to deny self and to serve others in a new and surprising freedom. The man, made willing to be nothing but the tool and bondman of God, "*has his fruit*" at last; bears the true product of his now re-created being, pleasant to the Master's eye, and fostered by His air and sun. And this "*fruit*" issues, as acts issue in habit, in the glad experience of a life really sanctified, really separated in ever deeper inward reality, to a holy will. And the "end" of the whole glad possession is "life eternal."

Those great words here signify, surely, the coming bliss of the sons of the resurrection, when at last in their whole perfected being they will "live" all

through, with a joy and energy as inexhaustible as its Fountain, and unencumbered at last and for ever by the conditions of our mortality. To that vast future, vast in its scope, yet all concentrated round the fact that "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," the Apostle here looks onward. He will say more of it, and more largely, later, in the eighth chapter. But as with other themes, so with this, he preludes with a few glorious chords the great strain soon to come. He takes the Lord's slave by the hand, amidst his present tasks and burthens (dear tasks and burthens, because the Master's, but still full of the conditions of earth), and he points upward—not to a coming *manumission* in glory; the man would be dismayed to foresee that; he wants to "serve for ever";—but to a scene of service in which the last remainders of hindrance to its action will be gone, and a perfected being will for ever, perfectly, be not its own, and so will perfectly live in God. And this, so he says to his fellow-servant, to you and to me, is "*the gift of God*"; a grant as free, as generous, as ever King gave vassal here below. And it is to be enjoyed as such, by a being which, living wholly for Him, will freely and purely exult to live wholly on Him, "in the heavenly places."

# THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"A Lamb as it had been slain . . . came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne. And when He had taken the book, the four living beings, and the four-and-twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb."*—REV. v. 6–8.

THIS may be called the Sunday of the Providence of God; in the Collect the Church leads us to confess before God the fact that His "never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth." It is with reference to this truth of the Collect that I take my text, and the message of the text in connexion with the Collect has to do with the relation of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Providence of God.

You remember the scenery which surrounds the text. St. John has a vision of the eternal Throne. He sees it at first (ch. iv.) as the Throne of creation, before which the song of creation goes up. But now a new figure appears; He is announced as "the Lion

of Judah," and He appears as "a Lamb that had been slain." He is seen before the Throne, approaching it, but soon, so the after scenes indicate, He mounts upon it. And now, first, He takes from the hand of the Enthroned a sealed book, waiting to be opened—a book seen doubtless as a scroll, which could be completely unrolled only by the breaking of the successive seals which held the edges down. To break those seals no created being was found worthy. Then this mysterious Lamb appears; His worthiness for the work is at once acknowledged by all the hosts of heaven; and He addresses Himself to unseal, and to unroll.

What did it mean? As you know, the book of the Revelation has been interpreted with great variety in detail, but on one point a great number of believing students are agreed—that it is a prophetic hieroglyphic picture of God's providential dealing with His people and the world, to be closed only when the bright eternity shall come in, with the new heavens and the new earth where there is no night, nor death, nor pain, nor sin. The unrolling then of the book, so as to disclose the visions contained within it, is obviously a picture for the developments of the Providence of God, and He who holds and opens the book is the Lord and Master of that process.

## The Eighth Sunday after Trinity

When we speak of God's Providence we mean His thought and will directed upon a great intended end; and the supreme end is His own glory, and (within that end) the eternal good of His people, and of the creation which He has made. Now our text reveals that this wonderful Providence moves in a profound connexion with the saving of sinners. The Son of God is seen here in charge of human history, being also in charge, O Christian believer, of your salvation, and of mine. Nothing is outside the authority of the redeeming Christ, even in the world's most open field. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore"—with the remembrance that "the book" is in my hands; that to me is committed the never-failing Providence which orders all things in heaven and in earth, so that no event, of the seen or of the unseen, is neglected by it, or is an obstacle in its way.

Let us observe that this is a matter not of sight but of faith; we do "not yet *see* all things" ordered by Him. No, but we have an adequate guarantee that they are being ordered; adequate because it is given by the Word of God, and signed and sealed by the fact that Jesus the Son of God died, and rose again, and is on the Throne. Remember ever that the Lamb has charge of the book. Providence in the hands of a

"Supreme Being," an eternal Unknown, is cold comfort; Providence in the hands of the Son of God, who died and rose again, is comfort warm with love. We need God in Christ, not God in the abstract, to give us that "everlasting comfort and good hope." "God out of Christ," says Martin Luther, "is a brazen wall; God in Christ is a Father, calling us to His open arms."

Yes, it is the holy Lamb of God who unfolds the book of history, and, as one item in it, the book of your biography. All "the course of this world," its war, commerce, polity; Russia, France, America, Britain, all the ends of the earth; and then also the sparrow falling to the ground, and the numbered hairs of the disciple's head—it is all, without exception, under the secret dominion of our dying and risen Saviour. Therefore we can love, we can hope, we can be at rest.

"*All* times are in Thy hand,
Jesus the Crucified!
The hand my cruel sins have pierced
Is now my Guard and Guide."

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.*"—Col. ii. 6.

"*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*": or, more literally, "*If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also order our steps.*"—Gal. v. 25.

THESE two texts I take in the closest connexion, and the second I take in order to throw light on the message of the first. Three points we notice in it, and then pass back with them to the first passage.

i. "By the Spirit we *order our steps.*" The word rendered "walk" here, in the Authorized Version, differs from that rendered "walk" in most passages; it means walking as to its detail—the particular steps, not merely the general course. We are reminded that in the Christian life nothing is unimportant, and that in nothing can we really afford to go alone. In detail as well as in general we need our Lord's holding and guiding power.

ii. "Let us order our steps *by the Spirit.*" The

blessed Comforter has given us life. But He has not given His gift and gone away; He stays always beside us, to assist us in its use. We are to work out the gift—by the Giver's teaching and in the Giver's strength.

iii. Our first text speaks of the Lord Jesus, our second of the Holy Spirit. But these Two, in their divine being, and in their saving work, are One. Particularly the Holy Spirit, so it is revealed, delights to work in us by revealing and applying to us the Lord Christ Jesus. If we may say it with reverence, He "preaches not Himself but Christ Jesus the Lord"; He manifests Him, He guides us to Him, He makes us "one spirit with" Him. So the "walk" which from one point is a walk by the Spirit, from another point is a walk in Christ. We speak then of Jesus Christ, and of walking in Him, but with the recollection that this walk is only possible for us through the working of the Holy Spirit.

And now we turn directly to Col. ii. 6.

(*a*) "*As ye have received* Christ Jesus the Lord." He refers here to their definite reception of "the truth once delivered to the saints." They had heard the revelation made once for all; they had received and believed the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, who was in the eternal glory, who came as Man upon earth, who died, who rose, and "in whom is no variable-

ness nor shadow of turning," "the same yesterday and to-day and for ever." It was the "One Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son of God, Light from the Eternal Light, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was made Man, and was crucified for us, and rose again the third day, and is at the right hand of the Father, and shall come again." Here is no shadowy Somewhat, shifting from age to age; it is "this same Jesus."

Thus had they "received" Him, as their creed, their truth. But then also they had received Him in their heart, to be their life. He had come to them in spiritual reality and power, loving, changing, saving, ruling, in the inner man. So they were to fall back, not only on their first hearing, but on their first life in Jesus; the days of their remembered conversion "to newness of life."

My friends, let us also do this. When sore beset by the thousand currents of conflicting thought around us, let us fall back, each for himself, on our first experience of a dying and a living Saviour. Many a tempting voice will die away before that remembrance.

(*b*) "As they had received Him, *so let them now walk in Him.*" "In" this unalterable Lord of glory, and of death, and of eternal life, they were to walk. What does he mean? The phrase sounds like folly, or like nothing, to the world. But to-

those who have got even a glimpse of Christ's fulness it speaks the very wisdom and the power of God. It is mystery, but it is fact, fact as present as it is definite. Do not banish it, as it were, to heaven. There indeed it will be developed into an eternal completeness; but the glory of it is begun below; the weakest believer is to-day in Christ, and is called to walk in Him. They were "*in Christ* before me," says St. Paul (Rom. xvi. 7), speaking of friends in Rome who, like him, were then in the very midst of a world of sorrow, sin, and death. "In Christ"; not only near Him, but "in Him." The man who has come to His feet, and touched His garment—behold, he is joined to his Lord's living Body! The branch is in the Vine; the limb is articulated to the Head; the bride with the Bridegroom is for ever one. Say it to yourself as a fact; "I, a sinner, have come through grace to my Redeemer; I am now in living reality His member, animated by His life, operated in by His will, instrument of His purposes; in Christ."

Well, then, "*so walk ye* in Him." What does this mean? It means *divine life applied.* You know the difference in science between the "pure" and the "applied"; the "pure mathematics" of figure and number in themselves, the "applied mathematics," where principles result in the practical triumphs of

the engineer. Our text calls us to a union with Christ "applied"; to spiritual fact developed into action. "*Walk* ye in Him," do not sit still and muse, but walk. Take this wonderful union down into practice; bring this secret of the heaven of heavens to touch the earth of earth. In Virgil's great poem he represents his hero Æneas traversing the streets of Carthage veiled in a magic invisibility. He walks in the place, but not of it, observing, but untouched. Imperfect as the parable is, it has something to say to us upon our holy theme. Walking in Christ, the Christian may tread this life's streets, spiritually screened, as it were, from "this present evil world." "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence," even "before the sons of men."

"Walk in Christ;" "order the steps by the Spirit." You shall find it possible then to tread over the hot ashes of the temptation to anger, and be at peace. You shall step with clean feet where otherwise you would plunge into the moral mire. The briers and the thorns of care and worry shall mysteriously be beaten down before you reach them. You shall "tread upon serpents, and scorpions, and all the power of the enemy, and"—wonderful promise—"nothing shall in any wise *hurt* you."

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net."*—Ps. xxv. 15.

LET us think awhile together of a certain Scripture parable of the spiritual life. Let us look at and handle the texture of the word "net" and then ask how to escape and how to avoid the thing it signifies. The word "net" is a word of definite imagery, and carries its own special lesson. One great requisite in a net is that it should be more or less concealed; it must be imperceptible to the victim as it lies hidden, in the grass, or among the bushes. And even when seen by eyes ignorant of its purpose, it is little to look at. It is slight, and, taken in detail, it is even weak. But it is so woven mesh into mesh that really it is formidably strong while perfectly elastic, as tenacious as it is in appearance frail.

The net is thus an apt parable of such spiritual

risks and temptations as lie in the familiar path of every day, temptations which may come in the form of the commonest of our common incidents; small occasions for the loss of patience, or of purity of thought; small provocations to envy, to deviations from truth in daily intercourse, or in ordinary business; small sparks to kindle pride or vanity; small excuses for sloth and self-indulgence; in short, petty opportunities to forget that we are not our own, and to allow ourselves in what is not according to the will of God. Yes, the nets *are* spread upon the path. The Christian who purposes to walk with God must look at the fact, and remember that they are there.

And it is no small humiliation to remember how often our own hands have had to do with the weaving of these nets. Very often our past has been busy preparing them for our present; let that thought warn us not to construct entanglements for to-morrow by spiritual slackness to-day.

And then, near the net, though out of sight, there stands the fowler. The great organizer of the forces of evil is there, the personal enemy ever on the watch to spread his snare for the soul.

Now, what shall we do with these things? Much is to be done, I do not forget it, which lies within the reach of our own thought and will. Much net-like difficulty may be precluded by common pre-

cautions taken in a Christian spirit, by avoidance betimes of place, and company, and sight, and book, which has a plain tendency to mischief. But when we come to the inmost heart and depth of the matter we have after all to own that our deliverance, our "bringing out," will be a sadly imperfect thing if we look no higher for it than to our own action or caution. Temptation in its essence goes deep as the very springs of the will; deliverance, to be deliverance indeed, must go as deep. And in this respect there is only one effectual method. Wonderful, paradoxical, direction and prescription! "*Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.*"

What surprising imagery this is! Let not the Christian think that no effort is to be made, no earnest thought bent upon the feet and the net. But a yet "more excellent way" is needed to give efficacy to the effort and self-examination. It *is* a paradoxical secret, but it is a perfectly true one; if you want to get clear of the net which is entangling you, do not study its meshes; *look up* "unto the Lord." He is the Deliverer. He understands the net and the way out of it better than you do. Tempted Christian, entangled in the net of your own mistakes—there stands your Deliverer. He is not yourself. He is not an idea, a principle, an abstract truth. He is Jesus Christ.

## The Tenth Sunday after Trinity

What is the besetment, the net, in your path? Is it vanity? Is it pride? Is it ill-temper? Is it waste of the talent of time? Such nets are cunningly woven. They are formidably strong. They are a sore burthen to drag, even for a mile along the road. Then make the revealed experiment of committing them to the Lord; He is able to deliver you from every net that Satan's industry and experience can weave. Make trial of Him, and you will find that the net is not so much plucked away as dissolved away from about your feet. His secret strength will so take possession of the heart given up to Him that you shall walk at liberty, treading on the net, finding the secret of His power.

"*Need and Fulness.*"

# THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee."*—1 Kings xix. 7.

THIS verse occurs in one of those great scenes of Scripture which photograph themselves on the thought and on the soul. Elijah in his strength had triumphed on Mount Carmel, and lorded it as more than king over king and nation, in his Master's name. But now comes the contrast; we see a man frightened, helpless, utterly discouraged, scared away by a mere message from the scene of his glorious victory. That message was a strange piece of evil insight on the part of Jezebel. She must have divined that the strong man would be *weak with reaction*; so she launched her threat, in all its impious daring, on the very morrow of the victory; and behold—Elijah feared, arose, and fled. Down through Israel, down to the utmost southern edge of

Judah (thinking, perhaps, that the house of Jehoshaphat would not effectually protect him from their kinsman Ahab); onward, onward he goes, into the deep wilderness, shrinking from even the presence of his servant, till at last he lies down in the exhaustion of despair.

It is a *teaching* picture, drawn "for our learning." Elijah was a giant in spiritual strength; but he was so only in his God. In himself, he was, like every other man save but One, mortal, sinful, ready to halt and fall. And this, we seem to gather, he had been tempted to forget. Listen to his groan beneath the juniper: "I am not *better than my fathers.*" Ah, who had told him that he was? Does not this shew us what had been the whisper of the tempter into the ear of self-love? The subtle enemy had drawn him out of strength into weakness, because out of God into self-esteem. So still it is, when the Christian, however greatly used for God, listens to the falsehood which exalts himself. He takes then the surest path to total defeat, to deepest mortification. Again and again the Lord shows His people that so it is. When they are weak, then they are strong; but when in themselves they seem strong, then they are weak.

But there is another side to the picture. Look from the servant, prostrate and despairing, to the

Almighty and all-tender Master. He who is never weak entered into the weakness of His servant. He whose sympathy is measured by His eternity understood Elijah, and did not cast him off. He was patient with Him, and wonderfully tender. He felt for the exhausted frame and harassed nerves. And He saw to it that Elijah first received the blessed gift of sleep, and then not only sleep but food. The "cake baken on the coals, and the cruse of water," were the Lord's provision. He who had lifted Elijah so far aloft in spirit never forgot that he was in the body. "He knew his frame, and remembered that he was dust."

Again, we have here a parable of the grace of God in the Christian life. "The journey is too great for thee." Yes, Elijah was *to walk* from Beersheba to Horeb; a little to-day, a little to-morrow, through the grim wilderness of Paran. How was he to go? He was already tired out. Vain now was the iron will and the indomitable resolution. He needed a revival of strength from outside; and his Lord gave him, accordingly, something better than his own resources. The Angel brought him "angels' food, and he had meat enough." He had but to rise, and eat, and behold he could do the impossible; he could get to the Mount of God.

We too have a journey to travel, a hill to reach.

We are not yet there, but on the way; not yet in the street of gold within the gate, but on the path of the pilgrimage—which is indeed of one piece with its end, for both road and end are Jesus Christ; but the experience is widely different in the two. And the journey, do you not sometimes feel that it is too great for you? You think of next year, of next week, of to-morrow. "How shall I persevere, how shall these feeble feet ever reach the courts above? I shall one day perish by the enemy's hand; the journey is too great for me." Yes, but your Lord also knows it, and He says to you, "I understand it all; I bid thee go, not in thy strength but mine. I bid thee, first, not walk but feed;" "arise and eat;" and the Lord Himself is the living food. You remember the sixth chapter of St. John, and that great discourse where the true "Angel of the Covenant" seems to stand by all His people and to say, "The journey is too great for you; arise and eat," "he that eateth me shall live because of me" (verse 57). Faith is the lips and the throat by which that food is taken. But the power is not in lips or throat; it resides in the wonderful food. It is His part to make thee strong. Jesus Christ, unseen but ever with thee, in thee, is thy life. Wholly trusted, He can give victory and triumph, so that the traveller shall not merely drag his feet

to the end of the journey, but "shall walk and not faint," and shall stretch a strong hand out to others, leading them to the heavenly meat. And at last he shall climb the hill, not with feet, but on wings.

The journey of *life* is too great for thee. So, too, is the journey of *death*; not indeed in its length, but in its depth of unutterable change. It is but a step, but it is through a cloud, thin but awfully opaque. It is not distance but difference that makes *that* path too great for thee. But it is not too great for Him who is the Bread of life which cometh down from heaven, and who must ascend again thither with all that feed on Him. "My flesh and my heart faileth; the journey is too great for me; Thou knowest it, O my Master; but Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Thou wilt guide me, and then receive me with glory."

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"The Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys."*—1 KINGS xx. 28.

YOU remember the incident to which these words belong. It was that remarkable time when God visited in mercy His stricken Israel, not long after the great drought which ended with the sacrifice on Carmel. The Syrians invaded the country, just when the Hebrew forces were reduced to zero, and everything seemed ready to be swept away. It was an awful moment, not only as being dreadful in itself, but as coming after a time of sin, judgement, and mercy, and then (after Elijah's flight) a time of failure again. Yet even then the Lord remembered His people, and put His power upon their side, and they won a glorious victory in Him. The victory came in two parts. The first battle was on the highlands of Israel. The Syrians seem to have thought that Israel's national God was a

mountain Spirit, and that if they only could get their enemies to meet them on the broad plain of Jezreel, where Israel had often been defeated before, they would carry all before them; the mountain God could not help His tribes upon the level! Then the Lord sent His prophet to say that He was jealous for His glory; His enemies should feel that He was as strong below as above; down in the plain Israel should triumph in Him.

I see in this history a word to us in regard to the hills and valleys, not of Palestine, but of life. Human life has its hill-tops, alike in nature, and in grace. Whatever of itself tends to uplift or gladden us, and make us feel strong, is one of life's hills. There is the hill of youth, with its glorious possibilities and boundless hopes; there is the hill of strength and health, when we begin day by day with a buoyant enjoyment of our work; there is the hill of success; there is the green flowery hill of a happy home. In spiritual things there is the hill-top of "first love," the hill-top of a glad discovery of our Lord. There is the hill-top of the Lord's Day and of the House of God; there is the hill-top of the Holy Table, spread, spiritually, on the utmost heights aloft. Now of all these hill-tops the Lord is God. Hours of brightness and joy, natural as well as spiritual, belong to Him. He claims to be present in our

sunshine quite as much as in our shadows; and the sunshine is safe only when He is there. The hill-tops of strength are but precipices if we walk upon them without our Lord; they are as safe as He can make them if we walk on them with Him.

But life has its valleys as well as its hills. And of these too there are many sorts. Life sinks into a dark pass sometimes, in great anxieties, or bitter disappointments; or it becomes an "Achor," in which you are convinced of sin, as Israel was in Achan's woeful case. The Lord takes you down thither, to show you to yourself. He puts His finger on the sins of tongue, or temper, or spirit, or deed. He makes past iniquities awfully real to you, till you cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" Or He leads you through a valley of tears, as some dear one is taken from your side, and the shadow of death is upon you; or He brings you to that Valley of Humiliation, of which the *Pilgrim's Progress* speaks, and into which most of us find it (as Christian found it) hard to go down. Or—and this is what the history speaks of most pointedly—life looks to you not so much like a deep valley as like a broad, open plain, hot and featureless, where the land is flat and the air is faint. Your life seems full of uninteresting duties, things of the

earth, earthy, and you have to plod on from hour to hour with no positive helps to your Christian life, and, perhaps, exposed to actual opposition in the way of your walk with God.

But now, God is the God of the valleys. In the passage before us He makes it the great point that He *is* the God of the valleys. The hills may be taken for granted; but He is jealous for His glory in the lowlands, the dangerous plains where the fatigue is, and the hot air, and the malaria of the marsh, and where also the Syrians hope to bring their forces best into action. What does the valley represent to you and to me? Is it imaged to us by the defile? It belongs to the Lord. That strait pass where you know not how to turn, into which He seems to have shut you up, it belongs to Him; if you have made a covenant with Him He will keep it with you even there. He is the God of the valley of Achor, into which your treachery towards Him, and your defeat because of it, have brought you; He can meet you even there; such a valley is often a great opportunity for divine mercy. Or is your "valley" the open plain of common life and plodding hours, the "secular" things which you are obliged to do? The Lord is the God of these also. Read the many words in St. Paul's Epistles addressed to Christian slaves.

They had to do precisely the same outward duties after their conversion as before; nevertheless they were to find that God was the God of the plain; He could glorify it into a scene of triumph; it could all be done as "unto Him." If God made the Christian bondservant of those days more than a conqueror, can He not do the like for you? To-morrow, when we are not in the sanctuary of God, but in the shop, or in the study, or in the daily round of most ordinary life at home, we shall find Him the God of the valley, and we shall find it good to be there. Then, when the plain slopes down into that last valley which leads to the river's brink, He will be the God of that valley too. He will lead you all the way across, till you come to the Highlands of the other side, where you shall live aloft for ever with the God of the Heavenly Hills.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"So Gehazi followed after Naaman."*—2 Kings v. 21.

OUR first Lesson this morning is chiefly occupied with the story of Naaman. That story is one of the most striking in the whole Bible, as an illustration of Gospel truth. In itself it is extraordinarily full of life and vivid interest, as we read of the little girl, the Israelitish captive, made the means of guiding her Syrian master to the divine remedy for his disease; and then as we read of the perplexity and fear of the ungodly Hebrew king, who saw nothing but political treachery when Naaman came with his money and his letter; and then in the grand figure of Elisha, the more than kingly prophet, rebuking his own king for unbelieving fear, and afterwards, without fear or favour, prescribing to Naaman the plain, prosaic, humiliating cure of a sevenfold bath in Jordan. Naaman's vehement offence at first, and

then his frank obedience, and cure, and gratitude, and faith—all come before us as things which we seem rather to see than to read of; so powerful is the absolute simplicity of the Scripture story.

But there is another story in the chapter, the story of Gehazi; and it is to this that I ask your earnest attention now. It is full of teaching, of reproof, and warning, and "instruction in righteousness."

What do we know of Gehazi? We read of him in three main passages; and the first is ch. v. 12, where he is named as a servant, or personal attendant, of Elisha; just as Elisha had served Elijah, and Joshua had served Moses. He had lived for years in an air of holiness, and truth, and self-denial; he had walked with the pure—should he not be pure? with the holy—should he not be holy?

Up to that time, apparently, he *had* maintained a pious appearance; otherwise Elisha, so jealous for God's honour, would scarcely have kept Gehazi so near him.

Nevertheless, when Naaman turned away, Gehazi —just fresh from the miracle—thought only of the money that Elisha had declined. He instantly framed an ingenious lie, actually using the Lord's name in the matter: "As the Lord liveth, I will take somewhat of him." He took full advantage of

Naaman's utter want of suspicion. He accepted on false pretences about £700 worth of property; hid it in the tower, or storehouse; and went in to look Elisha in the face, with a fresh lie ready as his screen. We all know his bitter punishment. Alas, we do not know whether it worked repentance, and whether, though his "flesh" was "destroyed," his "spirit" shall be found "saved in the day of the Lord."

Gehazi's case speaks aloud to every one of us who has ever had the least consciousness of the dark power of inbred sin; it warns us *never* to trust anything less than the very reality of God's own grace to overcome it. Yes, it speaks to us one by one, and bids each beware. "Beware, O hearer of the Gospel! No outward ordinances ever yet shut out the deceitfulness of sin. The will and thought can run riot in the sanctuary of God; yea, at the Table of the Saviour. No holy connexions ever yet shut out the deceitfulness of sin. It is possible to despise and reject and exclude the Lord even when you daily see Him glorified in the life of His people; even when those people are your heart's own beloved."

What shall we do? Is it all meant to teach us to despair? No, brethren; the very opposite. It is meant, if it may be, to drive us from false refuges

to the everlasting arms, to the sure refuge, to the Almighty influence, even to the Lord Jesus and to the Spirit of our God. It is to warn—but also to invite us with love divine. It is to say to the soul that knows its sin a little, but not its Saviour: "Trust nothing else, nothing less than a real coming, your very self, to Christ. Ask nothing else, nothing less, than a real visitation of the Holy Spirit, to expose and to subdue your iniquities, by making plain to you your Redeemer's preciousness. Use every means indeed; but mistake none of them for the fountain. Acquaint yourself with Him, and you shall *not* be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." And it says always, to the very end, to the awakened and believing, "Take heed. No past experience, no present privilege, no service to Elisha, nor to Elisha's Lord, will ever do to keep down the traitor and keep out the enemy. Daily—now as ever, and so to the end—you must clasp your Lord's right hand, you must take home your Lord's presence, you must welcome your Lord's indwelling, which alone can overcome the deceitfulness of sin. To the end of the day, as in its morning hour, you must be washed, you must be sanctified, only in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

"*Fordington Sermons.*"

# THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

## THE CHRISTIAN'S AIMS, LIMITS, AND POSSIBILITIES

WE aim at nothing less than to walk with God all day long; to abide every hour in Christ; to love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves; to live, and that in no conventional sense, "no longer to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 15).

*We aim* to "yield ourselves to God" as the unregenerate will yields itself to sin, to self; to have "every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." In the region of outward life our aim is to break with all evil, and follow all good. It is never, never more to speak evil of any man; never to lose patience; never to trifle with wrong, whether impurity, untruth, or unkindness; never in any known thing to evade our Master's will, never be ashamed of His name. This

is our aim, not in any conventional sense, such as to leave us easy and tolerably comfortable when we fail. Not so; God forbid. Failure when it comes across this aim will come with the pang of a shame and disappointment which we shall little wish to feel again. It will be a deeply conscious discord and collision; it will be the missing of a divine smile, the loss of "the light of the countenance of the King." The Christian's aim is bound, absolutely bound, to be nothing less than this—"Let the words of my lips, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." We are absolutely bound to put quite aside all secret purposes of moral compromise; all tolerance of besetting sin, for the sad reason that it is besetting. With open face we behold the glory of the Lord, and ask to be changed at any cost, all round the circle of life, into the same image. We cannot possibly rest short of a daily, hourly, continuous walk with God, in Christ, by the grace of the Holy Ghost.

But I come to speak briefly of the *Limits*. I mean, of course, not limits in our aims, for there must be none, nor limits in divine grace tself, for there are none, but limits, however caused, in the actual attainment by us of Christian holiness. Here I hold, with absolute conviction,

alike from the experience of the Church and from the infallible Word, that, in the mystery of things, there will be limits to the last, and very humbling limits, very real fallings short. To the last, it will be *a sinner* that walks with God. To the last will "abide in the regenerate" (Art. IX.) that strange tendency, that "mind of the flesh," which eternal grace can wonderfully deal with, but which is a tendency still. To the last, the soul's acceptance before the Judge is wholly and only in the righteousness, the merits, of Christ. To the last, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. In the pure, warm sunshine of the Father's smile shed upon the loving and willing *child*, that child will yet say, "Enter not into judgement with Thy *servant*." Walking in the light as He is in the light, having fellowship with Him, and He with us, we yet need to the last the blood of Calvary, the blood of propitiation, to deal with sin.

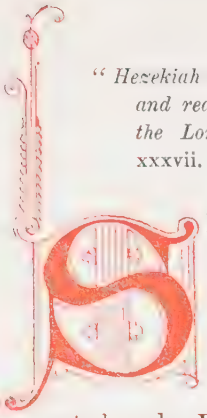
Then, lastly, come up into view the sacred *Possibilities* of the matter. It is possible, I dare to say, for those who will indeed draw on their Lord's power for deliverance and victory, to live a life—how shall I describe it? a life in which His promises are taken as they stand, and found to be true. It is possible to have affections and imaginations purified through faith, in a profound and practical sense. It is pos-

sible to see the will of God in everything, and to find it, as one has said, no longer a sigh, but a song. It is possible in the world of inner act and motion to put away, to get put away, "*all* bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil speaking," daily and hourly. It is possible, by unreserved resort to divine power, under divine conditions, to become strongest, through and through, at our weakest point; to find the things which yesterday upset all our obligations to patience, or to purity, or to humility, an occasion to-day, through Him who loveth us and worketh in us, for a joyful consent to His will and a delightful sense of His presence and sin-annulling power. These are things divinely possible. And, because they are His work, the genuine experience of them will lay us, must lay us, only lower at His feet, and leave us only more athirst for more. May I ask each reader of these pages to pause here with the heart question, "How high goes my own conscious aim, and what, as to the possibilities of grace, are my personal expectations?" And will he add a prayer? "Thou, Lord, who knowest my heart, all its desire and all its need, show me what Thou art able to do with it, and do what Thou art able; through Jesus Christ. Amen."

"*Thoughts on Christian Sanctity.*"

# THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord."*—Isa. xxxvii. 14.



INCE David's time the people of God have seen sadly many "changes and decays." They have been misled under Solomon by earthly splendour and power. They have been dislocated under Rehoboam into two hostile sections, and the hope of the old political power and prestige of David is gone for ever. And now the northern kingdom, so long the seat of open idolatry, is swept away by the Assyrian, and the narrow bounds of Judah are entered and occupied by the legions of Nineveh. The arrogant invader has already sent across the country from Lachish a detached force to summon Jerusalem. They have uttered their contemptuous invitations to surrender, and the king, as he hears what has been said, has "rent his clothes and

covered himself with sackcloth," and has sent to Isaiah, and received from him a brief answer of good hope. But the storm gathers again. Hezekiah receives this time, from the same or similar terrible couriers, sent now from Libnah, not a speech but a letter. And it is with this letter that we have to do. It is a very searching test of peace and faith to open some letters. Certainly it was so for Hezekiah when in that dark time he undid Sennacherib's epistle and "read it," read it over with his own eyes. It was sad reading. It was a coarse and insolent assertion that Hezekiah's God was a deceiver. Not that He was a nonentity; that was not the heathen's line of thought. Jehovah was in his eyes a god, one of the miscellaneous pantheon of the nations, merely on the level of the tutelary powers around him, the gods of Gozan and Haran, and of the Hittites at Sepharvaim on the great river. *They* had gone down before the Assyrian and his gods, and so would the god of small and feeble Judah go down also.

Let us not forget the tremendous trial of faith involved in such words spoken at that time. Assyrian paganism then, to every eye but that of faith, was a power enormously greater than that of Judah and its worship. In science and culture, as well as in military weight and force, Assyria was to Judah

somewhat as Germany now would be matched against Portugal. All the conditions of the case, in the order of nature, made that letter look like the sure and certain announcement of an inevitable and most terrific ruin.

But Hezekiah does not sit down to lament and to despond. He feels the savage wound; he feels it in the depth of his soul. But he takes it straight to the Divine Healer. Without one hint of delay, the narrative tells us that he "went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord." He had "spread it" once already before his own eyes, to read the syllables traced by Sennacherib's scribe. Now he spread it out again, and, as it were, presented it to his unseen King, that He too, with full and special attention, might see, word for word, what the heathen autocrat had been saying about Him.

As he holds it out to those eyes, he speaks with reverent freedom to those ears—he owns that the facts of the letter are true; the pagan *has* destroyed the nations, and burned their gods. But he repudiates the inference. These gods are no gods at all. Now let Jehovah deign to show Himself what He is—the Supreme, the Eternal, the Creator; "that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art JEHOVAH, GOD, even Thou only."

We do not read that any mystic voice of music, or

of thunder, answered Hezekiah from within Solomon's sanctuary. But a supernatural reply did come, through human agency. A messenger soon reached the king from the house of Isaiah, and brought another writing in his hand. It was Jehovah's dictated response to Sennacherib's epistle, promising the deliverance which "that night" was wrought by the Angel of Death in the vast camp at Libnah.

Such was Hezekiah's intercourse with God that critical day in the Temple court. What do we see in it, as a message to ourselves? We see an example, vivid and most noble in its aspect, of the way in which the believing Christian is to "cast his care upon the Lord," to "make known his requests" at dark and perplexing times. Does not the case answer to a great deal in the experience of Christians called to meet the real duties and difficulties of "this troublesome world"? The trying *letter* we may occasionally receive is but an instance of numberless possible trials which we are to "spread before the Lord." Take them all to Him. Take the book that has troubled your faith, take the temptation that has so easily and so successfully beset you, take the anxious phenomena of Church, of State, of World, of Family, which come before your mind's eye like threatening letters from the powers of evil, full of omens of defeat; and spread them out before Him

who understands how to meet them, every one, with solutions and deliverances beyond all your hopes. And do not forget *where* Hezekiah carried the letter and spread it before the Lord's eyes; "into the Temple of the Lord." The true archetype to the Temple of old is nothing less than our incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, the veritable, the historical, the objective "Man, Christ Jesus"; "Image of the Invisible God," yet actual Man; as truly a figure of history as Augustus, or Charlemagne, yet also One with the Eternal Father above all time; as truly our Human Friend as ever a mother was to her little child, yet also our Sacrifice for sins and, in the literal fact of His Resurrection, Conqueror of death. He is Altar, Sacrifice, Ark, Shechinah, Temple. We must take the troublesome letter, the bewildering book, the anxious event, the serious state of things, to God in Him. We must spread it out before God in Him. There we shall be reassured of all the unseen truths and blessings. And so we shall await the answer in peace, and see the thing we dreaded trodden down already under the feet of our faithful God.

"*Prayers and Promises.*"

# THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"So I prayed to the God of Heaven."*—Neh. ii. 4.

T is a story of "silent providence" which we have before us in the book of Nehemiah. Not one miracle is recorded in it, or in its companion book of Ezra. But not the less impressive, therefore, is the teaching of those books on the possibility and the blessing of direct intercourse with God.

"So I prayed to the God of Heaven." Here is our point for study. We have here before us a human heart in sudden and instantaneous communion with God. Nehemiah speaks in our presence to his heavenly Master, asking for guidance at a moment of crisis in his path. And his act of intercourse with God is full of instruction for us, in its character, its circumstances, and its conditions.

*Its Character.*—It was as brief and as *ejaculatory* as possible. It took place between a question and

and its answer. "'For what dost thou make request?' 'If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.' . . . So it pleased the king to send me, and I set him a time."

Nehemiah's prayer must have been the work of moments; not so long as a minute; for a minute makes a long and embarrassing interval in a conversation, however intimate and free; and this conversation was very far from being such. It was a prayer, for certain, offered in silence. Even as a matter of policy, Nehemiah would scarcely have made his anxiety (which was great; see ver. 31) prominent to the king's mind, as an audible petition to his God would have made it. And anywise, such praying aloud would have been a dangerous anomaly. In a moment, in silence, the petition was formed, presented, attended to, and answered.

Let us also learn the art of such quick communications with the Throne. We are invited to them by the assurance of more than instantaneous *attention*; "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isa. lxv. 24).

*Its Circumstances.*—It is the banqueting-hall of the enormous palace of the Persian, in the festal hour, before the great king and his queen; the splendid

representatives of the vast world-power which at that moment held in absolute vassalage, as in the hollow of its giant hand, the People of the Covenant. Everything around him would go to make Nehemiah "look not at the things unseen but at the things seen," and to direct his whole thought, whether for hope or despair, upon the human forces around him and their earthly magnificence and mastery.

But it was otherwise with Nehemiah. As truly as Moses before him, "he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible," and as holding intercourse with Him. The Persian Empire and its emperor vanishes from between Him and his God, and leaves the air clear for the soul's instantaneous cry, and for the silent answer to it.

If we are "found in Him," we shall find ourselves as free to hold intercourse with Him in the most crowded and the most distracting scene of secular existence, so it be our duty to be there, as in the upper chamber, or the twilight field. Free, silent, instantaneous — the communication shall be real indeed.

*Its Conditions.*—Here let us refer back to the first chapter of Nehemiah's artless book. What do we see there? We see the same man in intercourse with God *behind the scenes.* And that was no casual or lightly intermitted process of intercourse. He "sate down

and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of Heaven"; pouring out a confession and a petition full of the details of the woe, and sin, and need. His soul was in antecedent contact, conscious and ample, with his God; therefore he was ready to touch Him so instantaneously in the moment of his crisis.

The message to us is self-evident. It is our first and continual duty to seek our eternal Friend, persistent, humbly, fully, in all the detail of confidence, behind life's curtains.

Then, when we have to walk in front of them, "before the sons of men," we shall not be taken by surprise; we shall know how, in an inner secrecy, and with a blessed certainty, to "make our requests known to God."

"*Prayers and Promises.*"

# THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."*
—Gen. xvii. 1.

THESE were the Lord's words to Abraham when Abraham was ninety-nine. It was a time of sore trial to his faith. The years rolled on, and he was childless still. Yet the hope of the world depended upon the child of the promise yet unfulfilled. Then came this message; the Lord appeared and spoke; how, we know not, only we know that it was revelation, not reverie; not Abraham's idea, but God's own utterance to his spirit. The Master spoke to the servant, and led him away from his anxieties, above them and beyond them, to himself, the Almighty God, or (to render *El Shaddai* more exactly), the all-resourceful God, the all-sufficient God; a word including all power, but giving life and tenderness with it besides. And withal He led him away to the peaceful thought of a quiet service under the Master's eye, carried on

in single-hearted fidelity. "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect," perfect in thy will to walk. This would be the best possible secret for a peaceful trust in his Master's promise.

We will not now consider further the case of Abraham, though it will deepen our thought on the text to remember the circumstances under which it was spoken. I take the words now as one of those great Scriptures which we may lawfully study apart and in themselves. I take it as the text for some simple meditations upon the walk of the servant of God.

Here we have before us both thoughts—the servant and the walk. The word "walk" speaks for itself, and the word "servant" lies hidden in the phrase, "Walk *before me*," which gives us the idea of the life-work carried on in a sovereign presence under a "great Taskmaster's eye." It is not, "Walk *with* me," nor again, "Walk *in* me," as in that wonderful word of St. Paul's, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk ye in* Him." It is "Walk *before* me." The phrase is not unfrequent in the Scriptures. Long years afterwards Abraham used it to Eliezer, speaking with the happiness of a clear conscience before God; "The Lord before whom I walk." Later again, Jacob, at the end of his days, recalling the holy past, speaks of "Him before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, did walk." In the

Prophets and in the Psalms it occurs again and again: "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living;" "in the light of the living." Everywhere its bearing appears to be the same; it is the thought of a surrendered life lived in the presence of its Possessor.

So here we have that great truth of the Scriptures, that redeemed man is the servant of his God, not in the sense of hiring and contract, not in the sense of duty rendered on a terminable arrangement, nor, again, of a service done merely because it is personally agreeable to the doer. No; in Scripture almost invariably the idea is connected with bondservice; the man *belongs*, and is therefore at the disposal of his Possessor; his Master has all rights over him, and he has none against his Master. "Bought with a" mighty "price," he is altogether "not his own."

"Servant of God." It is a glorious word, so glorious that Scripture often reserves it for the very greatest of the saints. Moses, who knew God face to face, is distinctively called "the bondservant of God." The Apostles, inmost friends of God Incarnate, delight to call themselves, "bondservants of Jesus Christ." Shall we not covet the same title, or rather love it, for it is already ours? "Yes, Lord, I am not only Thy worshipper, Thy adherent, the reciter of the creed of Thy glory, the bearer of

the name of Thy people. I am personally Thy property, I walk before Thee, Thou Almighty One, as Thine own."

Such self-surrender seems, perhaps, a forbidding thing from outside; but try it, and it will prove far different from within. From without, it is like the grey, rocky wall of some stern castle, to be entered only through the guarded door. But you enter, and the castle is a palace, and its garden is a paradise, and the Master walking in it transfigures Himself into your tenderest Friend. But you must enter in to know; you must accept the service to find it "perfect freedom."

Meanwhile, this great truth stands never alone. The servant of God, His absolute property, is never merely His servant. He is always also His "son that serveth Him" (Mal. iii. 17).

But now we come to the word "walk." It is a metaphor very frequent in Scripture. A Concordance will show you this at a glance. What does it mean? It means life viewed in its active occupations; not so much as a journey (though this thought is not absent) as a scene of duties in which the worker moves from hour to hour, to and fro, and in and out. The servant is at work in his Master's domain. Unhasting, he is yet unresting, looking always for the next thing to do. His loins

are girded, he is not loitering, nor dreaming; he *walks* before his Master's face. He does this anywhere and everywhere. In his most solitary hour and in his most public hour, in the home, in the shop, in the field, on the journey, in the college, he walks, ready for the Master's will, "before the Master's face."

"Walk before me, and be thou perfect," be thou single-hearted. The words carry a double message straight to our lives; a message of searching, and also of holy joy. First they say, "Christian, you are never for a moment alone; in the most secret spot, in the most secret thought, you are never alone; you are followed about as surely by that present sight and hearing as you are followed about by the air you breathe and by the ground you tread."

> "Set God before thee; every word
> Thy lips pronounce by Him is heard;
> Oh! couldst thou realize that thought,
> What care, what caution would be wrought!"

Yes, let it bear on the use of your tongue, on the use of your time, on the use of your example; you are never out of sight or out of hearing of the Holy One, to whom you belong. Let the whole weight of that fact tell upon your soul. Do not live with your back to your Master; meet His eye

with a look which says, "I know that I am Thine, and that Thou art here."

But then the same thought comes with its blessing and its joy. Whose gaze and hearing is it that follows you about? Is He indeed "an austere man," standing in the shadows with a cold eye bent on you while you are toiling in the sun? No, this everlasting Observer is the everlasting Friend, to whom you are infinitely dear. Yes, infinitely, for you are a member of His dear Son. He sticketh closer than the noblest brother; He is immeasurably your kindest Friend. You are not only near Him, you are in Him, by union with His Christ; that union which is not only a majestic arrangement, but an embrace, close and tender beyond your thought. So walking before Him, you are indeed, in a sense most sacred, never alone. In the deepest loneliness, never alone; under the heaviest discouragements, never alone; toiling in a cold mist of circumstances, yet never alone. You live, you bear, you work, in the sweet secret place of an everlasting union; one with Him who does indeed entirely own you, but takes an interest untold in you, His property; delights in your nearness to Himself, and holds you by His own right hand.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light."*—1 John i. 7.
*"Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."*
—Isa. ii. 5.

YOU remember how the verse which forms my first text ends; "We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." That is to say, where there is this walk in the light, there the Lord and His servant indeed have communion together; and then (a promise specially needful where a "walk in the light" brings even the specks of defilement into view) the atoning blood avails evermore for the disciple's acceptance, and procures evermore for him the gift of the promised Spirit to subdue his iniquities.

"If we walk in the light." What is the special suggestion of that phrase? It sets before us two main conceptions; a walk in the light as to illumination, and a walk in the light as to joy.

i. To walk in the light is to live, move, and act as those who see things around them as they are, instead of under the veils and overshadowings of self-deception and self-will. In this connexion take special note of the words, "as He is in the light." How is God in the light? In this respect, that He sees all things exactly as they are, without a mist, cloud, refraction, or distortion. He sees His own eternal Being just as He is; His own infinite glory is present to Him as the most absolute of facts, necessary, infinite, all beautiful and all good.

Again, the Father sees the Son just as He is. "No one knoweth the Son but the Father." It demands an infinite insight fully to understand Christ. The deepest sighted believer here, to whom the Lord Jesus is most precious, has but touched from the shore the waters of His glory; only to the Father's infinite sight that infinite ocean is all known.

Again, God sees sin just as it is, and as no other eye can see it. He sees it as the "abominable thing that He hates," the harsh and horrible discord with His will. To Him it is no "fall upward," no painful process of development, as some would take it now to be. It is never anything but condemnable, whether it be sin manifest and outrageous, or sin silent and quite in secret.

Again, thanks be to Him, He sees the atoning

Sacrifice just as it is. To Him the "bleeding glories" of Calvary are seen as infinitely and for ever satisfying and pleasing; "worthy" indeed in His eyes is "the Lamb that was slain," perfect and eternal before HIM is the redemption wrought out by the blood of the Cross. And He sees the power of His Spirit and the possibilities of His grace just as they are. He sees in their wonderful fulness the deliverance, rest, and power laid up in Christ, to be given to faith by the Spirit's touch.

Now, if we are to "walk in the light, *as He is in the light*," we see thus in measure what this means. We are to step as it were into the Lord's field of vision, and to accept with willing eyes His light upon things as they are. We are called to a walk in which, as to Him, there are no concealments and no reserves. We are called to see, at whatever cost of humiliation, our unutterable need, our tremendous contrast to the holiness of God; while on the other hand we are to behold, in some measure, "with open face, the glory of the Lord."

ii. Here let me take up my second text, and pass on the loving appeal of the Lord's great prophet: "Come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." Come, friends and brethren, and look away from everything to Jesus Christ. Here is a something with which to walk and to work in the warm light,

shed from the face of the Son of God. Behold the Christ, the Lamb, the Risen One, the Ascended, the Coming Jesus; who shall say what the FATHER sees Him to be? Infinitely great He is to the Father's heart, loved by Him before the foundation of the world, so that whatever is in Him is quite close to that heart, fully within that love. Oh, come then, and in the light of the Lord behold "the King in His beauty," your Saviour and your God. The truest joy ever given to the human heart is in the sight of Christ Jesus, and all that He can be for you, as your very own. Christ is the light of Heaven, and when the soul steps out into that light and walks in it, receiving for its very self's need the blessed Person and all He is, then it has on earth the light of Heaven.

And what will it be when the light in which we walk passes, as it will pass, into the everlasting day? Here we see not all things, even in the light He gives. Of Scripture itself it has been well said that it is a lamp rather than a sun. But the day will come when the sun will rise, and the path will be found to have passed into the golden street of the City, where "the Lord giveth light," and "the Lamb is the Lamp thereof." Then you will look around and see indeed; "in Thy light we shall see light" for ever.

Heaven is no dream. And it is not reached

by dreaming. It is reached by a walk in the light, in the light of the conviction of the God of holiness, in the light of His blessed glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Walk, not as others.*"—Eph. iv. 17.

"WALK, not as others." So I read our text, in its most general application. Its first message was, of course, to the Ephesian converts in the midst of the heathen, in that city of idolatry and of iniquity. We, by God's mercy, dwell in a land of Christian light; and let us not forget the mercies of that fact. Unspeakable is the difference between heathendom and even nominal Christendom; none can tell the restraining and moderating power in the world's life of pervading Christian ideas and Christian witness. So the text cannot mean to us in all its details what it meant to the Ephesians.

Nevertheless, this message, in its heart and centre, is still the same. For what does the Apostle in effect call on them to do? To live, in the Lord's Name, *above public opinion;* to take a line of their

own against it, just so far as it might be against the will of God.

And this, remember, was an appeal, not to exceptional and eminent Christians, but to the Christian. Had the man come, just as he was, to Christ, to find in Him pardon and life? Then, of course, and at once he was Christ's, for service and obedience; he was bound to walk at his Master's orders, "not as others."

And this is for us to-day. In England, as in Ephesus, we are saved, if saved at all, to belong and to obey; as those who are "delivered from this present evil world," in the tyranny of its unhallowed thoughts and ways. Under all differences, we have this in common with the Ephesians; the world is around us, and we are to walk "not as others."

But now we pause to ask what the text does *not* mean. Not for a moment does it mean that we are to take a line of our own for the sake of contrariety. That is not the spirit of the Gospel. The Gospel is essentially a power which amalgamates, and leads to kindly concessions, where right and wrong are not concerned. It gives a death-blow to self-conceit, and so smooths many an angle in human intercourse. The Gospel is the noblest school of courtesy, for it leads us to esteem others better than ourselves. It is an education in sympathy, and in the power to take other people's

points of view. It makes a man sensitive to the rights of others, and willing to consider even their prejudices with respect.

But if so, if this is what the precept does not mean, what does it mean? It means such union with the Lord that the line of His will shall always be our rule. Let those who take another line around us be ever so many, and let them be ever so influential; our part is, in union with Him, not lightly to judge them, certainly not to anathematize them, but indeed not to walk their way.

Is your lot cast among those who think little or think scorn of religion, who utterly neglect God's Word, or take up with the last fashionable attack upon it; who despise His sacred Day, that sweet garden of rest and holiness which He has fenced for man's benefit, and whose fences man is now so busy treading down? Walk not as they walk. With quiet firmness take a line of your own, in obedience to conscience and to the Lord. Do you find yourself among those who in some sense profess religion, but reconcile it, alas, with practices that are not of truth and of love—with unkind word, with dishonest enterprise, with self-indulgent sloth? Walk not as they walk; take the Lord's line, if you bear the Lord's Name. Let Him lift you above the stress and power of that rough, turbid stream, the world's

opinion, which will be far too strong for you if you trust yourself in it out of Him.

If by the world we mean, not merely so many multitudes of people, but people whose principles and practice are not governed by God, then necessarily the world, however it may be veneered, is never hallowed. It does not get educated into holiness; its maxims and standard are not those of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you, Christian man, must be prepared not to walk its way.

How shall this be done? Here is a strong stream; who shall swim against it? Here is a vast crowd sweeping downward; who shall walk up through it the other way? You are called to do it, and in that very call you know there lies the promise of the possibility. And the possibility is explained close to our text, where St. Paul tells us why "others" walk as they do. It is "in the vanity of their minds, with a darkened understanding, alienated from the life of God." Such is the secret of their gravitation downward. Then you and I are to be lifted upward by the opposites to these conditions; by union with the life of God in Christ; that union which is realized in loving communion with the Lord; by eyes opened to our Saviour's glory, as we look for it in His Word, and apply what we see to life. So will the mind

lose its "vanity," and receive the holy strength and weight of a Christian will.

"It is not in us." Man of strong will, thank God for your strength, but use it only in Him. That strong lever, if you make *yourself* the fulcrum, may only quicken your motion the wrong way. Man of weakest will, take your weakness to the Mighty One; you shall find His strength becoming yours. You shall find it possible humbly, but invincibly, to walk not as others; you shall live as one who does not mount the tribunal to judge them, but judges this rather, that for himself the will of God is the law of life.

If we would "serve our own generation by the will of God," before we "fall on sleep," we must not be the slaves of our generation; we must come to Christ and yield ourselves to Him, and be ready, in His Name, and by His strength, and for His sake, to "walk not as others."

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"See then that ye walk circumspectly."*—Eph. v. 15.

THE Greek word rendered "circumspectly" may be more closely and simply rendered "accurately." The thought given is that of painstaking attention to details, under a sense of their importance; a remembrance, not only in general but in particular, of the duties of the Christian's walk.

Approaching the text, let us notice its connecting word; "See *then*." This points us, of course, to what has gone just before; and what was this? It was the Christian's duty to seek to exercise an influence for God in the dark world around him, from which, on the other hand, he was carefully to separate himself in spirit. He was to be a ray of light that should penetrate this darkness, and should both reprove it for its evil and attract out of it one and another of its victims. But in order to be this he

must himself be consistent; he must be "light in the Lord"; not in general only, but in detail; he must "*accurately*" walk. The text therefore has to do with Christian conduct as it tells upon others, and not merely as it is right in itself, or as it is good for the doer. It refers to that all-important fact, that the saved man is saved not only for himself, but for others too; that his Rescuer "plucks him from the burning," not only not to be lost, but to be shaped into an implement; he is intended to have an influence, and to tell. This is a truth for all who are true. In one way or another, every believer is called to "tell" for Christ, even if it be in the humblest and the homeliest way. If he is watched by only two or three human beings, he has there an opportunity of "telling," and he is to take it. It is a solemn double call; on the one hand, never to advertise himself, never to pose as superior in goodness; on the other hand, always to remember the responsibility and the privilege of influence and example.

"See then that ye walk accurately." My brethren, remember the all-importance of consistency in order to witness—that witness which we must all bear, more or less by lips, more and more in life. Let us be covetous, let us be ambitious, of such a life as that, a life of witness in and through consistency. What

nobler hope can we have than to leave, when we pass away, a track like that behind us; a memory which shall say to those who care to think of it, that it evidenced the reality of Christ?

St. Paul bids us soar to the skies in our aims, but come down, in the fulfilment, to the pathway upon earth, with its step by step, its patient going on, its attention to the next thing and the next, if that end is to be attained.

Are we seen to walk "accurately" in matters of considerateness? In common Christian life, I dare to say, the word "considerateness" covers nine-tenths of consistency. Witness for Christ is wofully spoilt when that is forgotten. Does the Christian student at college give way, for example, to indolence on the Lord's day? Does he cause needless trouble by rising late, and wanting his meal late too; reckless of what this means to those who must bring it to him? He is walking very "inaccurately" if so, and his inaccuracy discredits every good word from his lips, and every text upon his walls. There are two things to which every Christian is called, as he is the Lord's servant and not his own master: he is called to *take* trouble, and he is called to *save* it; to be a *carer* for others, in unselfish readiness to help them: to be a *sparer* of others, as to what he asks them to do for him.

Again, are we found to walk "accurately" in the tone and manner of our life? are we careful not to be men of moods, uncertain in temper, changeful from day to day as to the spirit in which friends or attendants find us? Do not let matters of this sort drift. Do not dream that self can take care of self. Remember also that there is no promise that even grace will do the work of self-discipline. Grace is infinitely necessary that we may be able to discipline ourselves; but we, by grace, must *use* grace, in watching and in prayer; we must *think* as well as believe, if we would walk "accurately."

Are we accurate about the brightness and chastened cheerfulness of Christian life? A really gloomy Christian walks "inaccurately"; his steps are out of all consistency with those of the Lord of light and love. Let us seek for what He can give; a spirit bright with the pure gladness of "leisure from itself," a certainty of peace with God, a certainty of the Presence of the Eternal Friend, which must liberate, and elevate, and, if I may so say, naturalize our happiness, and must keep our sympathies open to the joys as well as the sorrows around us.

Remember, as we close, the sacredness of the "reason why" for this constant duty. It is to be done not for our own glory, but altogether because we belong to Christ. You have come to His feet for mercy

and for life; you have held up your hands to be clasped within His hands in surrender as His vassal. Your life is annexed by Him, and *what is His* can never be unimportant. True, you feel yourself, in yourself, to be as insignificant as you please; but in and for your Lord you are not insignificant, you are *significant*. You are a sign, a signal, by which others may be directed, or misdirected, as to Him. Shall we not discipline ourselves in a watchful conformity to His will, so that we may be true tokens and straight lines?

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.*"—Eph. vi. 10.

THIS passage asks to be read with full remembrance, first, of its *connexion.* Have you ever remarked that connexion? The passage comes in, naturally and in sequence, to close and crown a long series of directions how to live at home, how to please the redeeming Lord in the sphere of home duties. Husband, wife, child, parent, master, servant — these are the words which have led up to the thought of the armour, the conflict, and the dark foes who press round the believer in the field.

Is this unnatural? It is indeed surprising, for the moment, but not unnatural. I appeal to the heart of my reader, and I ask, is not home too often the scene of our greatest spiritual failures, our most manifest inconsistencies, our least resistance to the

enemy, and accordingly his greatest successes over us? It is a fact, a far-reaching fact, that just where the path looks most commonplace and easy the enemy of our spiritual life is likely to set his most subtle ambush. Where we are habitually least upon our guard he is habitually most upon the watch.

Thus much about the connexion. Think next of the enemies presented to our thought by St. Paul. What are they? who are they? In our Baptism we were dedicated and sealed to a manful warfare against an unholy triple alliance, "the world, the flesh, and the devil"; and we shall have to deal with the three even to the end. But the present passage isolates, as it were, the third member of the alliance, and deals with it alone. We have, as a fact, a host of unseen personal spirits put here before us as our foes. In the Word of God the Christian's conflict is seen to be one not merely "with flesh and blood," that is to say with frail mortal men, withstanding and tempting, but against this dark throng of unseen assailants, working personally, and working earnestly, in quiet as well as in alarming hours, for his spiritual loss and woe.

Observe next the precise and definite *aim* of these adversaries. It is to dislodge you, Christian, from a point on which you stand, on which you are

set and stationed by your Lord. You see yourself here as a soldier, but not as a soldier on the march through a hostile country, nor as running the errands of your Captain, but as posted, upon a vantage-ground, in the field. The strategy of the enemy aims above all things at getting you to leave it. Let us "stand," "withstand"; "having done all, let us stand."

Remember next what *the point of vantage* is, from which we are to pray and watch that He who keeps us "will not suffer our feet to be moved." The tenth verse of our chapter informs us; all-important information! It is nothing less than "*the Lord.*" "Stand fast, in," not only near, but in, "the Lord, and in the power of His might."

Let us stand, then, and be strong, *in the Lord.* Let us keep our communion with Jesus Christ clear and full. Let us, not now and then, but in a steady growth of habit, carry all our needs to Him and draw all our power from Him.

Keep the vantage-ground, and "put on"—what lies always ready for putting on—"the whole armour of God." Every piece of that panoply means, in effect, Jesus Christ believed in and brought to bear upon the foe. Observe this not least in the case of the soldier's *shoes;* "the preparation," that is

the *equipment*, "of the gospel of peace"; the arming of the Christian's feet with that strong appropriation of "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," which gives foothold indeed as we stand upon the Rock. But against every variety of need array yourself with Jesus Christ. He is both fort and armour. And He has overcome, and we in Him. The enemy who surges around us is real, is fierce; but he is only fighting on after defeat — a beaten, a broken, army. Let us stand where we are already set, and use what we wear, and be calmly confident of success, with glory for its end.

This passage reminds us that the believer's triumph in daily life over temptation, over the power of the enemy, is intended, in the plan of God, to be an experience full of peace. Fluctuations in success there may be. Nay, in the mysterious fact of our imperfection here, our imperfection of reception, there not only may but must be a falling "short of the glory of God," occasions very many for deep and tender confession of sin.

Yet, remember this, busy and burthened disciple; man or woman tried by uncertain health; immersed in secular duties; forced to a life of almost ceaseless publicity, social, ministerial, or however it may be. Here is written an assurance, a guarantee, that not at holy times and welcome intervals only, not

only in the dust of death, but in the dust of life, there is prepared for you the peace of God, able to keep your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus.

"*Thoughts on the Spiritual Life.*"

# THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE last verse of the first chapter of the book of Daniel reads as if merely a chronological note; "So this Daniel continued unto the first year of King Cyrus." But it is a pregnant statement; it indicates a very long persistency of character.

I ask to talk a little with my reader about that grand thing, *Spiritual Continuance.*

How shall I *last?* How shall my blessings *last?* The question is immensely important; for oh, how little profit for God there is in merely occasional and transient lifts and ecstacies of the soul, as compared with the steady shining, the all-the-year-long fruit-bearing, of the Christian life which lasts!

Let us look at this brief biography of Daniel. It tells me that he continued, that he held on, after a bright beginning. And it tells me that he did so for a very long time; for between the date

of the events recorded in the first chapter and the accession of King Cyrus lies a period of seventy years at least. It took Daniel from early youth to hoary and venerable age.

He was, then, beyond mistake, a man who lasted. And remember what *the circumstances* were under which he did so. Here was an exile, a captive, a slave, in the absolute grasp of the most despotic of all possible Eastern kings. The ruler under whom he began to "continue," as we all know very well, thought nothing of casting living men into a furnace when they declined to worship him, and was once on the point of destroying all the sages of his capital when they could not explain to him a dream which he had himself forgotten.

And the circumstances at the end of Daniel's journey were not much more favourable. At that time the monarch indeed was more reasonable, but the law, "the law of the Medes and Persians," was terribly tyrannic. To refuse to treat as God a not very strong man cost Daniel an awful visit to the lions' den.

And even when we put these special difficulties aside, how immense were his more ordinary temptations not to last! Daniel was a youthful Jew, transferred for life to the alien and poisonous atmosphere of heathen Babylon. In that huge city

he saw the apparently quite triumphant metropolis of heathen life and power. To every eye but that of faith the King of Babylon was the conqueror not only of Daniel's country but of Daniel's God. And meantime, as to occupation in Babylon, his special call was not to be the spiritual pastor of his fellow-captives, but to be from first to last the civil servant of one pagan emperor after another.

This was no easy life in which "to walk and to please God, and to abound more and more." Yet Daniel, in that life, *continued.*

And his life was far more than a mere maintenance of spiritual existence. It was a noble, a glorious course of conquering holiness. He accepted his life of profound trial with a profound and continuous "Amen" to the will of God, an "Amen" which lay deep among his secrets of continuance. And with the "Amen" of submission he joined a grand "Amen" of action. He did the king's business as surely no Babylonian king ever had it done before. Far on in his course, a very old man, after two generations of Oriental palace-life, how did he stand as to duty done? The bitterest critics who ever examined a man's life and books could find no fault in him except in "the law of his God."

Another noble consistency appears in Daniel's long continuance, a consistency in *tone and temper*

as he trod the path of duty. One idolatrous king after another he serves with a loyalty faithful, reverent, I might almost say affectionate, till we come to that wonderful climax of it all, the salutation, "*O King, live for ever*," spoken from the depths of the lions' den!

A glorious sunset closed that long day. The ship sailed, after its long, straight voyage, into a fair haven of rest and glory. It is toward the end of the book that the old pilgrim hears a messenger from heaven address him thus; "O man greatly beloved." Yes, he was dear in heaven; and heaven was around him upon earth. It was in the power of the Heavenly One that he lasted, that power which is the same for us to-day.

If Daniel lasted in Babylon, you and I can last in London, in Cambridge, or wherever Daniel's God has set us down. And so we come to ask next, what was Daniel's *Secret of Continuance?*

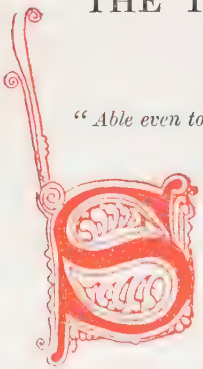
The answer, as I see it, is very simple, and shines out luminous from the open surface of his book. I sum it up in this: *Daniel took pains to keep up intercourse with God.* I do not think we can get much further than that in our analysis of the secret. Daniel took pains; he used means. He used prayer. He used the reading of the written Word. He used, as long as he had it, holy fellowship and friendship,

particularly in the way of united prayer. I repeat it; he took pains, he used means. . . . And here is a message for us, a message echoed, you remember, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (iv. 11); "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest."

"*Daniel, or The Secret of Continuance.*"

# THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Able even to subdue all things unto Himself.*"—PHIL. iii. 21.



O a great passage, a pregnant chapter, ends. As it began, so it closes—with Jesus Christ. With Him His servant can never have done; "Him first, Him midst, Him last, and without end." Jesus Christ, as seen in the previous sentences, is the present joy, and the everlasting hope. His perfected righteousness is the believer's actual deep safety and repose. His unsearchable riches of personal grace and glory are the constant animation and ever-rising standard of the believer's spiritual progress. He is the eternal Antidote to our fears, and also to our sins. He is the infinite Contradiction to the least compromise, under any pretext, with evil; and He is this, among other ways, by being Himself "that blessed Hope"; "the Lord Jesus Christ which is our Hope" (1 Tim. i. 1); so that the prospect of His Return, and what He will

do for us, and for Himself, when He returns, is to be our mighty motive in the matter of practical, aye of bodily, cleanness and holiness of life.

The whole passage now before us is strongly characteristic of the New Testament way of dealing with sin. In the first place, there is no lack of earnest and explicit warning. The moral and spiritual evil is labelled unmistakably. It is pointed out as a danger not hypothetical but actual; not floating in the air but embodied in lives and influences: "*Many persons walk* whom I tell you of, with tears, as the enemies of the cross of Christ." And of these persons, as such, it is unflinchingly said that their end is "ruin," "perdition"—dreadful and hopeless word! In all this lies a lesson for our day. In many quarters the solemn utterance of warning is now almost silent; it is regarded as almost unchristian to warn sinners, even open sinners, to do anything so very much out of the fashion as "to flee from the wrath to come," "the wrath which is coming upon the children of disobedience." But this is not the apostolic way, nor the Lord's way.

Yet this passage, this heart-searching appeal, while it deals with warning, does not end with it. Its strongest and chosen argument is not fear but hope; not perdition but "the coming again of our

Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him." St. Paul has to guard the Philippians against a most subtle form of sensual temptation, a masterpiece of the enemy. In passing, and with bitter tears, he points to the gulf where that path ends. In closing, and with his whole heart, he points to the coming Lord in His benignant glory, and to the unutterable joy of our being then, finally and even in our material being, transfigured for ever into His likeness.

For our own blessing, and for that of others, let us follow this example. Let us not take an opiate against the ideas of judgement, wrath, perdition—unless, with our Bibles quite open, we are quite sure that such things are only dreams of a past religious night. Let us take urgent heed, above all, for ourselves, lest we *lose faith in the warnings of God.* But all the while let us present to ourselves, and to others, as the great argument of all for saying "No" to specious sin, "that blessed Hope." Let us consider Jesus Christ, till He shines upon us in something of the glory of His Person and His Work. And as for our bodies, and His call to be pure in body as in spirit, let us continually remember that "the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Cor. vi. 13). Let us recollect as a glorious fact that the body is the

purchased property of the Lord Jesus; that He cares for it, as His dear-bought possession; that He can, by His own Spirit, sanctify it now, through and through; and that He is coming, perhaps very soon indeed, to "transfigure it to be conformed to the body of His glory."

The whole genius of the Gospel tends to connect together, as closely as possible, holiness and happiness. They are to act and react in manifold ways in the Christian life. Holiness lies at the root of happiness, as its deep condition. But also happiness, from another point of view, waters the root of holiness, and expands its flowers, and brings its sweet fruit to fulness. "The joy of the Lord is your strength"—your strength to say to temptation a "No" which shall be entirely willing and simple. Never shall we so tread down the tempter, and the traitor, as when we are "rejoicing in Christ Jesus," and "in the hope of the glory of God."

"*Philippian Studies.*"

# THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

*"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities."*
—Amos iii. 2.

THIS is a solemn and soul-searching verse. It is one of the very many Scripture verses where the God of love, in the faithful truthfulness of love, warns sinners of what He thinks of sin and what He means to do with sin. May He, by His Holy Spirit, who alone can convince of sin, be with us and reason with us in His own way "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement."

Amos had a message to Israel, a very solemn message, about the Lord's mercy and their own sin. He had to remind them that it was they whom the Lord had rescued from Egypt; it was they to whom the Holy One had made Himself known as a Father and a Redeemer; it was they who had been allowed to know so much of this blessed

God that the other families of the earth, in comparison, knew nothing of Him. It was they who had had all this light; and yet, ah yet, they had sinned; grievously, obstinately, and in many ways, they had sinned; sinned amidst the light; sinned though they knew their Lord's will. Now, therefore, what does the Lord say to His sinning people? It is the message of a Father's anger; "You only have I known, therefore will I punish you."

Israel is a type, a pattern, a picture, both of man's heart as it is by nature, and also of man's heart as it becomes by grace, by the new birth; of man as he is when he belongs to the Israel of God, and of his Lord's dealings with him then. So here; this message to Israel was not for them only, 2700 years ago; it is also for the human soul to-day. It is a message to *professed* Christians. It is a message to *real* Christians.

i. It is a message to merely professed Christians; I mean, to those who (let their own hearts judge of the matter) own the truth of the Bible, reverence the name of Jesus Christ, are familiar with the main truths of the Gospel—and yet have never, in the reality of the matter, *received* their Saviour, never given their will and soul to God, never broken decisively and honestly with sin, with what displeases Him, for His sake.

Mere hearing and mere knowing, with no real change of heart and will, no real devotedness of self to the will and truth of God, brings all the responsibilities of religion, and none of its peace. The hour of account will come. The Father of mercies will then be the "austere" Master of the parable, reckoning with His servants. He gives you now the talent; the precious talent of His Book, His Gospel, His Truth; free and fair occasion to know Him;—where are the fruits? "You have I known, therefore will I punish you."

ii. But Amos bears a message to real as well as merely professed Christians—to those who by one means or another (but always through a power not their own), have come to know God, to love God, to deal with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, in spiritual reality.

Believing heart, do not forget the message of Amos. It was sent to those who knew God, and it spoke of iniquities, and punishment, and the rod. The message has a bearing on your conscience and your life as well as on that of the Christian only in name.

What does it tell you? It warns you that, though a believer, you are a sinner too, even when you are most of a consistent Christian. To the last you need St. John's word; "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

And then—if you are *not* consistent? If you "did run well, but Satan has hindered you"? If you once could deny self for Christ, but now little by little are denying Christ for self? If you once loved the company of the godly, and now are more and more easy in the company of the worldly? Well, what then? What does it all say? Thank God, it does not say that all is lost. It does not necessarily say that all is delusion; that you never loved God; that you are nothing but a self-deceiver. Not so. But the more surely you have known and loved Him, the more comes Amos with his message to you; "You have I known, therefore will I punish you." "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent."

"*Fordington Sermons.*"

# THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT

*"I will restore unto you the years that the locust hath eaten."*
—JOEL ii. 25.

THE first reference of this prophetic passage is to a desolating invasion of the Holy Land by locust armies. The spiritual message of the words before us lies in the Lord's promise that, whatever the judgement might be, here described as a plague of locusts, He would restore to His penitent people the years which those locusts had eaten.

Observe the point of the expression. See the ungrudging mercy which it conveys. It is not relief only but restoration. It is not merely, "Your existence shall be prolonged; you shall live on through other years, to follow the years of desolation." Somehow, the years of desolation shall be themselves restored. The renewal shall be such, so rich and large shall be the prosperity, so wonderfully shall the past evil be made to serve your

future good, that the past shall have, as it were, a transfiguring resurrection out of death; it shall be added to the blessings of the present.

Without more preface I appropriate this glorious promise, first made to sinning but penitent Israel, and apply it to the Israel of the soul, and to the land of promise in its inward sense. I take it to bear upon judgements and desolations of the heart, and to meet them with a promise of the restoration of the years which the locusts there have eaten. We may be bold to make this application. It is just in the manner of the Lord Himself, who takes from time to time a promise to ancient Israel, and makes it a promise to the soul; as, for example, in St. John vi. 45, compared with Isaiah liv. 13: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord"; "They shall be all taught of God."

There are many varieties of locusts, and the literal locusts, as enumerated by Joel, shewed these varieties. And their counterparts, the locusts of the heart and of the soul, are many indeed, and of many kinds. But there are two leading species which gather up under them nearly all the evil brood; the locust of Sin, and the locust of Sorrow.

i. *The locust of Sin.* I need not dwell upon these ravagers, and the way of their working; the awakened conscience knows them well. Who that is not spirit-

ually asleep does not understand the dreadful consciousness of the destructive power of sin, the backward look upon desolated years into which some cancerous sin has eaten? Alas for the things done that can never be undone, and the things undone that can never, never be attempted again! Alas for conscience resisted, evil example set, opportunity lost, Christ ignored or denied, in the "years that never come again"! Such recollections throw a blight over many a memory that would otherwise be all pure sunshine; years full of temporal mercies on the one hand are locust-eaten years, sometimes, on the other, by reason of sin.

At first sight it may well seem impossible to the convinced soul to dream of restoration in such a case. Mercy it can receive, at the foot of the Cross; but how can there be restoration? Have we not just remembered how irrevocable is the mischief of actual transgressions and omissions? Even so; in a solemn sense this is all too true. To all eternity it can never be the same as if those sins had never been. It can never be *in all respects* the same to have come at "the eleventh hour" as to have come in the morning. To have walked with God consistently from childhood to old age must for ever be a different thing from having come to Him far on in life, or from having walked with Him in a poor, intermittent

experience, serving Him to-day and serving self to-morrow. May we not say, that our *capacity for service* in the eternal Home will greatly and for ever vary according to such differences on earth? The "vessel for the Master's use," will it not be more or less capacious for Him above as it has more or less yielded itself to His moulding Hands below?

But yet, in a holy sense, it is possible for the work of even these dire locusts to be undone. *Nothing* can excuse one present sin, nor make it otherwise than hateful to God. But, in the mystery of His will and skill, He can take occasion from committed evil to make the man, while he remains a penitent for ever, a special instrument for His glory. Look at St. Paul. To the last he mourned over his rebellion against Christ; and he was right to do so. But that rebellion, without which his wonderful conversion could not have been, was the occasion, as we know, for such amazing manifestations of the grace of God that assuredly in its results for the world the life of St. Paul found restored to it the locust-eaten years.

Let the memory of every fall and failure so drive us to a faith, a love, a surrender, which in a sense could not have existed had it not been for those remembered things, that for us, too, as it may be true that the years eaten by the locusts are restored. If in us, as Christian men and women, penitent

memory is always quickening our communion with our Lord, we shall know what that restoration means, or however others will know it in us.

Then at last will come eternity, with its fulfilment of what has began in time; a wonderful "year of restoration" is on its way. What the locust of sin has spoilt will be restored indeed, when you "will be like Him, seeing Him as He is." You will never forget you were a sinner, for you will always know that you are saved; but the thought of what you were will only glorify Him who has brought you out of it, as you "serve Him day and night in His Temple."

ii. Then, as for *the locust of sorrow*—how brightly the desolate fields will blossom again into undreamed of glory! The past will more than live, to die no more. Intercourse with our lost beloved ones will be far more than restored. Christ's presence in us and with us even now so enriches personality that we have more to give to other people than we could ever have of ourselves. But what will it be then? Then He will be "all in all" in every one of the blessed multitudes; then, in Him, each will contribute to the happiness of all; while yet we shall specially delight in the presence of those whom our Lord specially gave to be ours on earth, and tuned us into peculiar harmony with them.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# ST. ANDREW

*"Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."*—Rom. x. 18. (From the Epistle for the Day.)

*"All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee."*—Ps. xxii. 27.

VERY slight change in the translation will make that last verse more literal, and also more significant. "All the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall *return* unto the Lord." The promise is not merely of a turning which might be a change of direction from almost any line of motion. It speaks of *returning*, as to a place once occupied, but since forsaken. Such is the change foretold; such is the past position indicated. Mankind shall "remember" and not merely understand. Mankind shall "return," and not only travel, "unto the Lord."

Man's recovery is, from one aspect of it, an awakening, a recollection, a remembering, a returning.

True, *the individual* was never unfallen. But *his nature* once was. And so when the individual, dead in sins, is by the Spirit's power "begotten again to a living hope," the nature is awakened again, as it were, to a living memory. It "remembers"; it knows that it was first made, not for self, but for God; it gravitates back to its original and most blessed centre; "it *returns* unto the Lord."

Let that thought animate the whole missionary Enterprise. From one aspect it is a preaching to "dry bones," devoid of all breath of the better life. But from another it is an appeal to sleepers to awake, to the oblivious to remember; an appeal in the accents of a genuine but long-forgotten home.

Here, in the Word which cannot lie, such a recognition and return, on a vast scale, is promised. Not some, but "*all* the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall return"; "*all* the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him" whom we see and love in His crucified and risen Son. The promise of the Psalm directs us, drives us, straight to the prayer for its fulfilment; the prayer for our beloved missionaries that they may live, and labour, and speak, and shine, in the fulness of the Spirit's power, and the prayer that the same Spirit may so mightily work upon mankind, upon "all the ends of the earth," that He shall divinely wake them to

"remembrance." So when the Gospel herald comes along to bid them welcome to the God of Peace, the God and Father of the Christ of Calvary and of Glory, he shall find an exile-host already conscious of their captivity, and ready at the first call of the silver trumpet to "return unto the Lord."

*Notes of a Sermon.*

## ST. THOMAS

IN a few bold strokes, drawn here and there in his Gospel, St. John gives us a characteristic picture of St. Thomas. The Apostles were indeed individual. Who could differ more than St. Peter and St. Thomas, or St. John and St. Thomas, or St. Paul and St. Thomas? But the same Lord was able to meet all their characters and all their needs.

St. Thomas is mentioned four times. From the first three passages we gather that he was a man of strongly marked characteristics. He took his own line; he liked to see through his own eyes. The subtle cause which led him on to the slope of unbelief was a nature full of self, the love of his own point of view carried to an exaggerated degree.

He had set himself against the thought that his Lord was to die. He would not contemplate the Cross. When the Cross came, it was a dire disappointment to all, but most of all to Thomas. Thus

he was, as it were, self-sentenced to despair, and he refused to look up and hope. Missing, by such self-will (for such it surely was), the blessings of the Resurrection evening, he spent a dreary week, intrenched behind his own perversity.

The Ten, we may be sure, laid siege to his doubts, all through that interval. They assured him, untiringly, that they had seen the Lord. It was a powerful argument; but all that week it was an argument in vain. Thomas took up an obstinate position; he must have *the like* evidence, or none.

Yet they laboured not quite for nothing. The week passed, and they met again, and *Thomas was with them.* They had not convinced him, but they had persuaded him to come where light and life might be found.

"Peace," says the reappearing Lord. His first word, as it was a week earlier, is peace; and it is impartially for them all, for Thomas among the rest; such is the mighty generosity of Jesus Christ. He who had *made* their peace *was* their peace; and He gave Himself as such, alike to glad believers and to the doubter, weary of himself. Abrupt, characteristically abrupt, is the response of Thomas to the greeting and then to the appeal of His divine Friend. And now the intense individuality is on the right side. From the lips of this man, by

nature so full of himself, but now transfigured by the sight of the Risen Jesus, comes the most magnificent confession of faith to be found in the whole Bible. Peter had said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Blessed." Thomas says, "My Lord, and my God." In a moment he leaps, or rather is carried, to the supreme pinnacle of adoring faith.

Then speaks the Lord again, and utters His last Beatitude: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Thanks be to Him who spoke those words, giving us in them a gift of joy which every one of us, even in this latest age, may claim.

We, truly, have not seen. But have we believed? Have we yielded our self-will up to the Lord Jesus Christ? Have we owned Him Lord and God, "my Lord, my God"? Then, waiting for the day when we shall see Him as He is, let us clasp the last Beatitude to our souls, and know that even we are blessed.

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL

*"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."*—GAL. i. 15, 16.

I SELECT this passage for a very practical and simple purpose. It gives us the crucial point in the most wonderful of all Christian biographies, from its inner aspect. While St. Luke records the light from heaven, and the audible voice of the glorified Jesus (all endorsed by St. Paul himself in 1 Cor. xv. 8, where he ranks himself among the witnesses of the objective and historical Resurrection), St. Paul here thinks only of a light and a voice in the sphere of his soul; "He revealed His Son *in me*." He remembers for ever the hour when the spiritual and self-evidencing glory of Jesus was supernaturally unveiled in and to his deepest being. As for Peter, so for Paul, "not flesh and blood, but the Father which

is in heaven," did the work; and with a sovereignty of time and mode all His own. And this was, "that I might preach as my Gospel the Son of God," might carry Him as glad tidings to men.

"*The Cross and the Spirit.*"

WRITTEN IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

Could he but once, the Saint whose glorious name
These roofs and awful walls for ever bear,
Could Paul once stand, the thin soul-wasted frame,
Beneath yon organ, on the pulpit-stair;

Not he unmoved, methinks, would scan the steeps
Of arch-crown'd columns, and the enormous round
Of the stone sky above, whence distant leaps
The noonday sunbeam, hovering to the ground.

Yet these a moment only could prolong
That upward gaze, when once he mark'd beneath,
Circling and passing still, our human throng,
Us, conscious heirs of sin, of tears, and death.

Few words, perhaps, but mighty, would he spend
To re-baptize that Temple to his Lord;
Then speak of things unseen and without end,
Judgement, and grace, and blood of ransom pour'd.

## The Conversion of St. Paul

I sit, and muse, and turn his page awhile,
Till dreaming thought the chief of saints recalls,
And accents seem to sound along the aisle
Once heard in Syrian or Ephesian halls.

"*Christianus and other Poems.*"

Let us approach this section of the Book of Truth with no less reverence and submission for the thought that the Christ of God used His "chosen vessel" as no mere mechanical vehicle of His Truth. He took and employed for His sacred purposes the whole wonderful nature, the whole living and radiating personality. He wielded for us the whole complex world of His servant's deep experiences of toil and pain. He spoke to us not through his lips only but through his heart, aye, through his suffering, broken, yet believing heart.

"*The Second Epistle to Timothy.*"

# THE PURIFICATION

*"Blessed are the pure in heart."*—St. Matt. v. 8.

HERE is such a thing, according to the Holy Scriptures, as heart purity; that is to say, there is such a thing as a state of the human heart, in which the man, the genuine man, the person of the present day and of modern circumstances, entirely loves the will of God, and entirely seeks to do it. There is such a thing as a human heart which, habitually, and with the joy of a steadfast sympathy, not only approves of virtue, which is the verdict of conscience, but rejoices in it, as at once its liberty and its law; or rather, not in it but in Him of whom virtue is but as the sunshine to the sun. And such joy and sympathy is purity of heart. There is such a thing as will, mind, and affection, united, not divided, against the tempter and for the will of God. There is such a thing as an internal *no* to the siren-call of evil which is entirely true, for it is but the other side of a *yes*

which, "out of a pure heart, fervently," responds to the call of Christ. Things can be true to virtue and to God at those "first springs of thought and will" where our true life runs up and out. The man, the real man, can take his place among the blessed ones who are pure in heart.

It is profoundly true that till we see the Lord as He is, we shall never be fully like Him—that is, we shall never be wholly without sin. It must needs be, then, that, to the last breath, I hide myself from the eternal judgement in the "Rock of Ages, cleft for me." But then, I will not forget, I will remember with joy and hope, that, in a sense relative indeed, yet magnificently real, things can be so revolutionized in me, yea, to the depths, that my heart can be genuinely cleansed; my will can be honestly attuned to the will of God; not merely my assent, but my love, not only my moral sense, but my heart, can go out to that now beloved will. Heart purity, in a sense consonant with all penitent humbleness, yet a sense strong and genuine, can be mine, so that I may "walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing," "all meeting of His will."

But how shall this thing be? Who can be saved from the love and from the power of sin?

We shall never do it of ourselves. At the centre of things, man is powerless to be his own transfigurer;

he can as soon run, he can as soon soar, from his own shadow. But his Maker and his Redeemer, as man yields himself to God, can lift him from that shadow into light, and set him free indeed. What is needed is—that *Person*, "dwelling in the heart by faith," so to make His chamber clean.

"Blessed are the pure in heart." Then, "create Thou in me a clean heart, O God."

"*The Secret of the Presence.*"

# ST. MATTHIAS

"*Come unto me.*"—St. Matt. xi. 25. (From the Gospel for the Day.)

"*Jesus said unto them, He that cometh to me shall never hunger.*"—St. John vi. 35.

THE petition, whatever prompted it, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," drew forth one of the Saviour's most heavenly utterances. May we not with reverence say that to His holy human soul there was even in that obscure but earnest request an appeal profoundly moving? He speaks not only from the plenitude of truth, but from the abundance of love.

"No man knoweth the Son save the Father . . . Come unto me." "I will raise him up at the last day." "He that believeth in me hath life eternal." Every one of these phrases is familiar, but can we too often and too freshly meditate on the phenomenon they involve—the Lord's unparalleled *self-assertion?* Is it madness? or is it Deity? It must be one or the other; and I think we may trust conscience

to give the answer, without calling in any very explicit argumentation to decide that dilemma. But then when the verdict is given, when the very self-assertion of the words proves the speaker God's coequal and consubstantial Son—eternal, almighty, all-holy—we must not stop as merely having solved a theological problem. We must forthwith believe; and thereby enter on the possession of life eternal.

He who comes to Jesus Christ shall never hunger; shall have the life eternal. For this life as well as for the world yet to come, He is the one secret against the pangs of the dire thirst and hunger of man's sinful soul.

Jesus Christ the Son of God, Jesus Christ the Bread of Life, who gave Himself in the blood-shedding of His atonement for the sinner's life, is the *Summum Bonum*. He is the infinitely safe and holy Satisfaction of the aching conscience. He is the ever vivifying Object of the once restless will; the inexhaustible Subject of the searching and meditating mind, the all-blessed Attraction of the warm and longing affections. He, when indeed we know Him, is our Hope, our Peace, our Heaven.

*Notes of a Bible Reading.*

"And the angel said, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God."

*St. Luke i. 30.*

# The Annunciation

One beautiful utterance above others seems to rise unbidden to the lips of Angels when they accost men and women of the family of God. "*Fear not*"; how often they say it—at Nazareth, at Bethlehem, in the Garden of the Resurrection! Man instinctively *fears* the sudden manifestation of the Unseen; he trembles with unutterable awe when he knows he is in the open presence of a personal spiritual Power. But these Powers of the upper world, "excelling in strength," are gentleness itself with a troubled human being who loves God. Whatever their unseen sphere contains, it contains nothing for such to fear. It is thronged with "an innumerable company of Angels," and they are all the kind friends of the believer in Jesus, their Lord and ours. Do we belong to Him, as those who have responded in faith to His Redemption? Then "with one sweet voice" they bid us not to fear.

# THE ANNUNCIATION

"*And Mary said, Behold the bondmaid of the Lord; may it be unto me according to thy word.*"—St. Luke i. 38 (literally rendered).

IT was just after the setting of the sun, so says an old and beautiful tradition, that the Angel came to the cottage door at Nazareth, and brought his message of transcendent grace and glory to the betrothed Maiden there. Legendary art (as in the design preceding this page) represents him as a winged form, alighting from the sky; but the Gospel narratives elsewhere, in their presentation of Angels, suggest to us rather that he came like a human visitor, stepping to the door, and into the chamber, or into the courtyard, different from man only in a certain radiancy of form and vesture. At first, perhaps, Mary took him for just some unexpected guest of the house; she was "troubled" over the reverent salutation to her pure simplicity; only by degrees did she know that a

courier from the very Throne brought that amazing message with its quiet, unfathomable words.

It is an all-beautiful scene, the blessed and blissful Angel, and the sacred Maiden, face to face in the starry twilight. And its beauty rises to its acme at the close, when Mary receives the tidings of her unimaginable privilege with the meekest and most tranquil words of *self-surrender* ever uttered; "Behold the bondmaid of the Lord; may it be to me according to thy word."

> "So parted they; the Angel up to Heaven,
> Through the thick shade, and Mary to her bower."

Thus was preluded the supreme Wonder of the Will of God, the holy Incarnation. Heaven was about to stoop, embracing, to the earth. "For us men and for our salvation" the Son of the Blessed, God the Son of God, the all-creating and sustaining Word, was thus preparing for His entrance into the full verity of human life; to take to Him our whole nature, never to lay it aside, but in it and through it for ever, being for ever unalterably the eternal God, to save, and overcome, and reign. And how was the Wonder to be wrought? with what shaking of the seas and skies, with what more than Sinaitic majesty of wind, and cloud, and fire? Nay, it was to be through a holy village

Maiden's will, perfected by grace into something yet deeper and tenderer than humility. It was to be through her meek consent to the eternal Purpose, spoken that quiet evening, in a little house, in a little town, in a corner of the world; "Behold the bondmaid of the Lord."

To the Gospel of her most blessed Son, in all its inmost character and process, holy Mary spoke that hour a preamble so profoundly true that *it is impossible* that the record of it should be an afterthought, an invention. For the Gospel of the Incarnate, Crucified, and Risen is that of One whose path to universal empire was drawn through infinite humiliation; and it is the Gospel which calls the man who would be "exalted" by his Lord even to eternal nearness to the heart of God to seek that height by sinking out of himself in penitence and surrender.

1906.

# ST. MARK

*"Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry."*—2 Tim. iv. 11.

THE interest of the mention here of Marcus, Mark, is great and peculiar. We cannot reasonably doubt that he is the Marcus of Col. iv. 10, one of those followers who were a "comfort" to the imprisoned Apostle at that time, a cheer amidst his cares and sorrows by their faithful love. It is equally safe to suppose that he is the Marcus of Acts xii. 12, the "John Mark" to whose mother's door St. Peter went after his mysterious release, to find the disciples praying together for his deliverance. If so, he was the man whom Paul and Barnabas took with them (Acts xv. 25), first to Antioch and then on their earliest missionary enterprise in Asia Minor (Acts xiii. 5, 13), and who so sorely grieved and disappointed Paul by turning back and leaving his leaders at Perga, for some not quite worthy motive (Acts xv. 39), the defection which lead later to the "sharp dissension"

between Paul and Mark's cousin, Barnabas, and to their unhappy separation. That was a sorrowful and ominous incident. How easily it might have prompted to St. Paul's mind a hopeless application to Mark of the Lord's words about the ploughman who turns back, and have even led him to put down Mark as "reprobate silver"! Is it not all the more beautiful, and all the more encouraging, to see this man more than restored—to the Apostle, and to the Lord Jesus? It may have been the loving Barnabas, with whom (Acts xv. 39) he "sailed to Cyprus," who helped him back to courage and to sacrifice; for assuredly Barnabas, however hotly he had "dissented" from Paul, was still *himself*, and would long all the more to see his cousin wholly right with God because he had been, perhaps, his too eager advocate with man. But, however, so it was. Marcus, a few years after his spiritual defeat, appears as St. Paul's "comfort." And now, a few years later again, in the very reign of terror, he is so "serviceable for ministration," so capable, so active, so devoted, so sure to be ready to come and help, even in formidable Rome, that he must be "taken up and brought" with Timothy.

Such in outline was the story of this man "of like passions with ourselves"; this Evangelist, this writer (for such he was) of our wonderful oldest Gospel, yet

also this poor frail man, more than restored by the loving power of God. Shall not his experience of self, and of grace, cheer us about others now? Shall it not cheer us about ourselves?

"*The Second Epistle to Timothy.*"

## ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES

"*Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*"—St. John xiv. 8.

"*For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*"—St. James iv. 14.

### THE ETERNAL PROSPECT

And dost thou shrink in prospect of that clime
Where immortality takes place of time,
Asking thy troubled spirit oft, in pain,
How her frail vessel shall such weight sustain,
Where æons out of æons rise unroll'd
In volume all unmeasured and untold?
Soon there (as *soon* shall there be understood)
To cease to be will seem the perfect good;
To crumble into rest; to let the soul
Loose from within, to mingle with the Whole;
A poor crush'd Atlas, buried to be free
Beneath the orb of his eternity.

Nay, dreamer, cast away such views forlorn;
Thou wilt not be a bearer there, but borne.

Not from thyself the life-springs shall ascend
Which no beginning knew and fear no end;
God in thy all will there be all at length;
Thy strength will rest for ever on His strength.
Who asks the boat the uplifting flood to fill?
Who asks the flower to prop its native hill?
Do wheeling eagles for their skies take care,
Or with their wings create the ambient air?
For that long morrow think no thought beside
This thought, that God will there Himself provide;
He, mother-like, shall fold thee to His kiss,
And feed and bear thee on through timeless bliss.

*Written by the Lake of Como*, 1905.

# ST. BARNABAS

*"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."*
—1 John iv. 8.

GOD is love."

What a word is this! What a simple word—what a powerful word! It has had a mighty practical influence since the old Apostle first wrote it down, twice, at the Spirit's bidding in this Epistle. It has opened a door in heaven through which countless souls have looked with joy and peace, knowing and believing the love of God, who is Love. And the conviction of its blessed truth has animated countless lives to labours of love for man, through the knowledge of God, who is Love. For to love Him is to learn to love His will; and His will is plain and clear, both in the Bible and in conscience; "he that loveth God must love his brother also."

This holy fact of God's Nature lies at the root of the vast works of mercy that have spread

over the world since Christ Jesus came. I say not that no works of philanthropy were known before the true light shone. Man, even unregenerate man, has a conscience in his fallen estate; and it speaks of pity. But few know how rare *by comparison* genuine impartial works of mercy are and were where the religion of the Bible is unknown. And one thing is certain, that the religion of the Bible is the one religion that has not only answered the cry of man's *soul* for peace, and hope, and holiness, and an eternal heaven, but has fully honoured man's *body*. Yes, the one supremely spiritual religion is also the only one that has promised immortality to the body; that tells us how, for the believer, body as well as soul shall be preserved to a heavenly life. Great is the power which lies in such a truth, both to warn man from the horrible snares of bodily sin, and to prompt him to earnest efforts for the relief of bodily suffering, if only for the sake of Him who took our nature, who hath a Body like our own.

God is Love. God, the revealed God, is Love. This His revelation of Himself has simply created a mighty mass of agencies for good—works of love and pity, both for souls and bodies, all over this world of grief, pain, and death.

God is Love.

Such is the Fountain; it is worthy of its Stream. This Love of the Being of God came forth, unasked, unmerited, in the love of His Acting. He, this God, loved the world; so loved it that He gave His only begotten Son for the sinner's life. "He spared not His own Son"; "He commendeth His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;" "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is Love."

"*Christ is All.*"

# ST. JOHN BAPTIST

*"They went and told Jesus."*—St. Matt. xiv. 12.

THE disciples of John "went and told Jesus." Told Him what? The terrible things which had just happened. The men who had been disciples and followers of John the Baptist took his body and buried it, and went and told Jesus—told Him how mysteriously their master had been taken from them.

Did you ever think how mysterious, as well as crushing, the death of their master must have seemed to them? John had been pronounced to be a second Elijah. What happened to the first Elijah? After many years of faithful witnessing for God, he was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven—visibly translated. What happened to the second Elijah? He was wickedly put to death in his prison cell by a cruel king at the desire of an unprincipled woman. What a strange thing this appeared, doubtless, to

those who knew him as the foretold forerunner of the Messiah! They had expected his career, in its course and close, to correspond to some extent with that of his great predecessor. But their expectations had been falsified, their hopes blighted; and they had carried his headless corpse out of the dungeon of the castle of Machæuus, and had buried it. So, having lost their master, they—his disciples—were cast adrift as sheep without a shepherd; and I have no doubt they were downcast and despairing. Now, at this time of ruin and disaster to them, notice *the one thing they did.* They "went and told Jesus." What better thing could they have done?

"When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart." The parallel passage in St. Mark vi. shows us that Jesus had been saying to His own disciples, "Come ye apart and rest awhile." And it seems He took with Him not only His own disciples but these new-comers, with all their burden of sorrow, disappointment, failure, and blighted hope. He took them with Him. He did not receive them coldly, reminding them that John himself had declared, "He must increase, but I must decrease," but He sympathized with them in His own gracious way; and when they came to tell Him of His great forerunner's death,

He took them with Him to rest awhile. And in that rest, we may be fully assured, they saw enough of His wonder-working power, heard enough of His words of grace, to tell them that they had come to the right quarter for comfort and help, and that they could fully repose in Him to whom they had come.

The point of the story is just this: under all circumstances it is infinite relief as well as highest wisdom to "go and tell Jesus." The most comforting and strengthening thing we can do in the bitterness of sorrow, in the harassments of daily life; the most effectual thing we can do for victory over temptation, and for equipment for all our service, is, absolutely and confidingly, to "go and tell Jesus." Let us go then, as these disciples of John did, not expecting some wonderful answer to prayer, not looking for some miraculous deliverance, but just to "tell Jesus," because it is new life and light so to do.

"*Need and Fulness.*"

# ST. PETER

"*Knowing that sudden is to be the putting off of this my tabernacle.*"—2 PET. i. 13 (so literally).

"*Grow in the grace of our Lord and Saviour.*"—2 PET. iii. 18 (so literally).

THESE texts are a reminiscence of that day by the Lake of Galilee when the Lord, having told Peter that he shall live and work for Him, goes on to say that he shall suffer and die for Him. Peter, now in old age, looks back on the scene, and realizes that nearer and nearer draws on the fulfilment, so awful to nature, of the well-remembered prophecy. Persecution is abroad; and Peter says to his converts that not only *soon*, but also (so the Greek word implies) *suddenly*, even by a violent death, he is to "glorify God."

And now, what is his message? "I am stirring you up, by putting you in remembrance." The passage is full of the accent of entreaty, not to drift away from the rock-foundation of the Person

and Work of Christ. "Cunningly devised fables," or rather, as we may render the words, "artfully woven myths," were creeping in thus early among the Christians. And he reminds them that they have not followed myths, but historical and immovable fact. "I can look back," he seems to say, "on the solidity of the work, the death, the rising again, of Jesus. I can remember His very look and tone as I stood with Him on the beach of the Galilean Lake. I can remember that earlier day on the mountain-top, when the Voice from the bright cloud proclaimed Him the Son of God."

Look at the man who writes this. When "the Lord shewed him" that he must one day "suddenly" quit the body at last, he was in the vigour of his youth; for the Apostles, surely, were all of much the same age as their Master; and the Lord then practically said to him, "You have years of loving service, years of shepherding, before you; then all will close with one stern hour of martyr-pain." And now Peter has grown old; he is near this anticipated end. And what a fair portrait of ripe, calm, gracious old age results from a careful study of his two Epistles! Is it not beautiful to see this man, after years of study in the school of Jesus Christ, so *unlike* his old self, and so much *like* his Lord? The man of sudden impulses, of eager but unstable

purpose, has now become the patient, sympathetic, self-forgetting counsellor and leader of a younger generation. He has learned the deep lesson of a large peace, both as to life and as to its suffering end.

St. Peter has himself done what he asks us to do; he had indeed "grown in the grace of the Lord and Saviour." Would we so grow? If we would, we must set out aright. St. Peter had made a right beginning; he had set out from the depths of self-discovery; then came a great discovery of Christ; then came the reception of the fulness of the Holy Ghost. His was a life of boundless usefulness, because it was a life lived simply in the strength of Christ, and put quite absolutely at the disposal of Christ. The Galilean peasant has left an indelible mark on all time; and why? Because Christ was in him, and he was in Christ. The Lord was the secret, not Peter. The vessel was earthen, but it held the Treasure, which was divine.

Let us call on one another likewise to grow—to grow from a living root, to develop the results of a genuine coming out of self to the Lord Christ Jesus. So, in our growth, we shall live for Him, until at last, suddenly it may be, but assuredly with joy, we shall "put off this tabernacle," to "get home" for ever "to the Lord."

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE

*"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword."*—Acts xii. 1.

IT was a blank mystery, this early, easy extinction of the witness of one of the "First Three" of the Apostles. But it left faith, certainly it left St. Peter's faith, intact.

To believe what we do not see as yet, if the warrant for belief is good, is totally different from knowledge by observation, but it is not in the least contrary to reason. It is the reasonable *repose* of reason on ground where it is not meant to *act*. Before an absolute mystery, where the Son of God says that all is well, we rest as reasonably as the little child is reasonable when it follows its mother through a dark room, holding her hand. "Sight" does indeed go a certain way. We look back over history, for example, and we see large outlines of plan and purpose. We find that things on the whole indicate

that righteousness makes for happiness, and wrong for ruin. We see indications, on the whole, of the growth of the kingdom of our Lord—a progress of things towards the final manifestation of that kingdom. But, ah, sight does not go the whole way, by very far; "clouds and darkness" beset vast regions of Providence. And let us remember, by the way, that the Bible takes account of this. The Old Testament devotes two books, Job and Ecclesiastes, besides the 73rd Psalm, and many another single passage, to the most outspoken statement of the awful mysteries of Providence, and to the expression of the tortures that they can cause to the believer's mind. Yes, God in His Book takes full account of all this. But then, He unfolds a vast reason for repose. He unfolds Himself, "in the face," in the Person, "of Jesus Christ," and so He bids us do what, on a memorable day, the Apostles did—trust the mystery, because of trust in Him. You remember how the Lord at Capernaum (St. John vi. 67) had *tried* His disciples by the mystery of His words; and many of the listening crowd "went away, and walked no more with Him," because they could not read His meaning, and did not trust Himself. But the Apostles did not go; and why? Not because they were keener witted than the others, and could solve the dark enigmas, but because they were sure of Him. What said St.

Peter (verse 68)? He did not point to the retreating crowd, and say, "Lord, they are foolish and we are wise; we see at a glance the meaning which they miss"? No; "Lord, to whom else shall we go? Words of eternal life Thou hast!" He who had the secret of eternal life might say what He pleased, "Though He slay me, I will trust in Him"; I have seen His face in the light, and so I can trust, even in the dark, whatever is done by the hand which belongs to that face of eternal truth and love.

*Que la nuit la plus noire Te voilerait,*
*Ton bras jusqu'à la gloire me porterait!*

*Notes of a Sermon.*

## WRITTEN UNDER A PICTURE OF THE FUNERAL OF ST. CATHARINE

See where the bright celestial Convoy bear
The Sword and Martyr through the fields of air!
What sacred calm and blest contentment grace
Alike the mortal and immortal face!
Hard task, to give the palm to either bliss,
And most commend the charms of that or this:
Blest Angels, ignorant of grief and pain!
Blest Saint, that felt them, ne'er to feel again!

"*Poems on the Acts of the Apostles.*"

# ST. BARTHOLOMEW

*"There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas, called Didymus, and Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, and the two sons of Zebedee, and other two of His disciples."*
—St. John xxi. 2.

THEY were together very probably in Capernaum, in Peter's house, waiting for their absent but promised Lord, waiting it may be for several days. And now some untold passing thing suggests amidst the expectancy their old occupation.

We watch the party which embarked: Peter, still leading, with the spirit and word of enterprise; Thomas, the self-conscious and self-asserting doubter no more, but willingly together with the rest; Nathanael, otherwise Bartholomew (no born fisherman), the guileless and genuine Israelite, the man of secret prayer; John the Beloved, already finding it habitual to be at Peter's side; James, his brother, first of the company to go to the Lord through death, as John the last; and the other nameless two,

whom we may, if we will, suppose to be Andrew and his fellow Bethsaidan, Philip. They were indeed together, and never again in the sense of inner union were they to be apart; working together on the world's tide with the net of souls, and sitting down together at last on the immortal strand around their glorified Lord, at rest.

It is of the essence of the Gospel to unite where it touches. It is obvious that the first disciples must have been scattered, in shame, disgust, suspicion, if the Lord had not risen from the grave. The Gospels show them in the act of scattering, as we trace the walk to Emmaus, and the conduct of Thomas. But a Saviour risen again (and He *is* the Gospel) is indeed a magnetic force to draw round Himself, and to draw to, nay, as it were, into one another, the utmost variety of human souls. A personal and recognized interest in His merits, and an experience of His presence and His power, as we realize that ours is but one harmonious instance among countless others of the "reception of Christ Jesus the Lord" (Col. ii. 6), this does indeed draw hearts together. And we may be very sure that this sense of a blessed *community* will be intensified, not chilled, by the intensity of the individual's sense of peace and power in Christ.

"*Jesus and the Resurrection.*"

# ST. MATTHEW

"*Ye serve the Lord Christ.*"—Col. iii. 24.

Y Master, show me all the joy
That comes to them that see
How every busy hour's employ
May all be work for Thee.

Whate'er I do, with toil and skill,
With active thought and hand,
It is my Saviour's housework still,
And wrought at His command.

Then let me do the simplest task
With free and happy speed,
As one who hears His sweet Voice ask
My service for His need.

And I will sing an inward song
To think, with holy pride,
In Nazareth's home how oft and long
His working Hands He plied.

For still the Lord who labour'd thus
  True toil delights to bless;
He lives and moves all day with us
  In all the stir and stress.

And what a time 'twill be above
  When comes the bright reward,
The wages of eternal love
  For servants of their Lord!

# ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

## THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY ANGELS

*"He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."*—Ps. xci. 2.

CATTERED all through the Bible we find notices of the existence of those holy beings, so closely connected with man, in the deepest sympathy with man, but who yet are not man—the Angels of God. Everywhere in God's Word we read of actions and events connected with man, done and spoken through the agency of Angels. We find Angels visiting Abraham, sitting in his tent's shadow, and passing on from thence to execute God's vengeance on the wicked cities; and so on throughout the Old Testament, in the case of saint after saint, prophet after prophet. In the New Testament we find Angels watching over the birth of the Lord Jesus, attending Him after His temptation, and in His agony in the garden, and present on the Resurrection Day, and after the

Ascension. We trace them through the Acts of the Apostles: an Angel delivers St. Peter from prison; an Angel plunges through the storm to cheer and strengthen St. Paul upon the ship. Then in the Revelation we see and hear them, in numbers without number, "ten thousand times ten thousand," in the great vision of which the Lord Jesus is the central light.

Angelic names are communicated to us here and there. Michael appears as the great guardian angel specially concerned with Israel's history, in the visions given to Daniel. "I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God," says another glorious messenger, at Babylon, and, ages later again, in the Temple at Jerusalem.

The Angel's spiritual position is evermore "in the presence of God"; he knows nothing beyond God's will; he exists to do it. But he sympathizes with man; it is his great delight and joy to forward God's will in its relation to man, and to be a favourite instrument in the redemption of man, through the work of God in Christ. We gather distinctly from the text, and from the last verse of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the Angels, yes, "all" the Angels, devote themselves to this "ministry." "He shall give His Angels charge over thee"; "Are they not all ministering

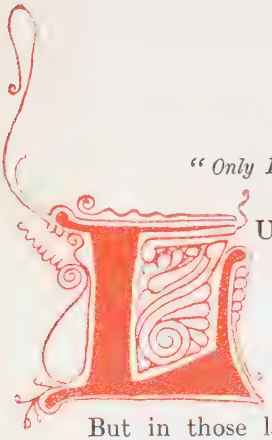
spirits, sent forth," as willing messengers, on this perpetual mission, "to minister to those who are to inherit salvation?" Our religion is a religion of facts, and this fact of the Angels is one of them; it is to be taken for fact that these servants of our Master delight to forward His purposes in us, and that He sees it right and fit to employ them, to help our steps upward, and to combat for us our fallen angelic foes.

Wonderful is their glory of nature and power. They "excel in strength"; they wield the forces of nature with mysterious ease and mastery; they triumph in their lightning flash of speed over space and time. Yea, they are the "morning stars" of the upper sky; they are "the sons of God" of the primal family (Job xxxviii. 7). But we, more wonderful still, are, in Christ Jesus, His sons in a sense yet more profound, a sonship which shall come out hereafter in an eternal family likeness, when "we shall be like HIM, for we shall see Him as He is."

*Notes of a Sermon.*

# ST. LUKE

*"Only Luke is with me."*—2 Tim. iv. 11.



UCAS alone is with me."

Here we come to that dear name, Lucas, Lucanus, Luke. Him too we have met before. In the Acts he does not write down his own name. But in those large and vivid sections of the Acts which run in the first person, beginning with xvi. 10 (where "*we*" gathered that the vision of the man of Macedonia was the call of God to "*us*") we see him as at once the author of the memorable narrative and the fellow-traveller of St. Paul. Then again in Colossians (iv. 14) and Philemon (24) he is with him in the Roman lodging; "the physician," "the beloved physician." And now, behold, the stern testing-time is come, the martyr-hour is near for St. Paul, and fair-weather friends fly away to right and left. But Luke is there, upon the spot; "Lucas alone is with me"; not indeed the only true friend left to him in Rome,

for he will presently be sending Timothy greetings from other loyal hearts before he closes (ver. 21); but he apparently is the only one who resolutely stays at his side in the dolorous prison, making it, for that dear leader's sake, his home.

St. Luke is a beautiful and noble example of a phenomenon most congenial to the Gospel. His own writings seem to disclose him to us as a man thoughtful, cultured, mentally gifted, the perfect antithesis to the militant zealot. He was, for his day, the man of science, trained to a refined profession. He was master of a style which has a distinction of its own. He was a true historian by nature. But also, by grace, he was the temple of the possessing Spirit. And in that power the instructed and accomplished man was found, in the midst of the Neronian terror, quietly heroic at his post of love.

"*The Second Epistle to Timothy.*"

# ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE

*"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, ye also, as living stones, are built up."*—1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

WE owe to this paragraph of St. Peter's a designation of our Lord priceless in its significance and power. Here, and here only, in Holy Scripture, He is called "the Living Stone." Repeatedly elsewhere, both in the Old Testament and in the New, we read of Him as the Stone, the Rock, Rock of Ages, Stone of the Corner—*Angulare Fundamentum.* And we have indeed abundantly many Scriptures where He appears in all the glory and in all the power of Life. "I am He that liveth"—nay, "I am the Life." But here only do the two truths meet in one magnificent witness to His worth and glory; only here is He named "the Living Stone."

*The* Living Stone is One. But there are many living stones. The Son of God is Only-Begotten. But there are many sons of God. Has man, in all

his weakness, and in all his inner spiritual death, touched Christ? Then the Stone gives man His strength; the Life gives man His life. And the result is—a living stone. And such living stones come to be many; and a Hand, mighty to construct as well as mighty to save, takes them, and builds with them.

What will the structure be? Is it not a glorious thought, the possibility for good, for virtue, for all that is most Christian, when strength meets strength, and life meets life, in the mighty fellowship and co-operation of holy friendship, and in a conscious mutual membership, hand joining hand, and heart joining heart, in the brotherhood of the faith and of the love of Jesus Christ?

No living stone is meant to lie alone by the road. It is made what it is in order to be built with others into one, in a union of heart, of life, of work, full at once of peace and power.

Remember that there is one secret, and only one, for the strength, the life, and the cohesion, in their inmost truth. Ultimately, that Secret is the Lord Christ, the Living Stone—Christ, in His contact, Spirit to spirit, with the man, and with the men, who come to Him. From the first, even to the last, there must the secret lie. The Apostle gives it to us here: "*to whom coming*";—with a coming, as the

tense of the Greek participle indicates, which, though it must have a beginning, is to be then continual—"coming, and coming, and coming again"; for pardon, for purity, for living power, touching—as Antæus touched his mother Earth, and was strong again—still touching the Living Stone, that we also may be always "living stones," results of Him.

"*The Secret of the Presence.*"

"His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads."

*Rev. xxii. 3, 4.*

# All Saints

No vague and, so to speak, inarticulate radiance encircles the throne of God and of the Lamb. It is a multitude that cannot be numbered. But it is no mere mass, no mere aggregated unit; it is a host of faces. Look, the very foreheads are to be seen; each forehead there, as it is here, the seat and the expression of personal character, of individual thought, and will, and affection; no two precisely alike there, any more than here, while all are suffused with the inner oneness of the family of God. Each happy personality, while one with Him, and in Him one with all, is *itself* for all eternity, sustained by Him unwearied in its blissful identity, and so contributing *itself*, that individual radiating point of life and love, to the joy of all.

# ALL SAINTS

HAT "long cloud of witnesses" who are seen, in the glass of Scripture (Heb. xii. 1), watching their successors as they run the earthly course, are assuredly permitted to be cognizant of us and of our path. And the same great Epistle informs us, on our side, in the same chapter (v. 23), that we, in Christ, "*have come*," not only (wonderful fact) "to an innumerable company of Angels," but also "to the spirits of the just made perfect."

The fact that our beloved are with the Lord is assuredly meant to develop a new gravitation of the soul towards "that world." On earth, if a dear friend leaves us for the other hemisphere, for a place of which perhaps we never heard before, there rises for us a new interest there, a new attraction. We busy ourselves to find out all we can about the locality and the life, and we supplement information with imagination, for very love. "Where the treasure is, there is the heart also." We live

where our affections are. Even so, will not thought and aspiration be, even unconsciously, magnetized towards the home which now holds our holy ones? Shall we not, through them, be drawn anew towards the Lord with whom they now converse face to face?

"*The School of Suffering.*"

There, in no terrestrial Temple, cloth'd in no symbolic white,
Live the purified for ever, in the living Source of light;
Resting, moving, serving, singing—songs and service infinite.

Ere the world's foundation founded is the Temple where they sing,
But the years of life eternal never age nor weakness bring;
All is new and young for ever in the City of the King.

There before the Throne for ever, and before the Spirits seven,
Still the chant of endless worship speaks the bliss of souls forgiven,
And the gladness of the ransom'd, after pilgrimage, in heaven.

## All Saints

Saviour, who Thy saints art gathering through that
happy Temple door,
From the silent streams of this world and the last
dark river's shore,
There to gaze and love for ever, and to wander
out no more;

Watch us yet awhile who travel o'er the oft-
beclouded tide;
In our toil and in our darkness yet a season be
our Guide;
Grant us too to reach Thy Temple, number'd with
the glorified.

"*Christianus and other Poems.*"

We shall see their faces yet,
Beautiful and dear for ever,
Where the flowers of Heaven are wet
With the rainbow of Life's river.

O the thrill, the rest, the bliss,
O the insatiable embraces,
When our deathless lips shall kiss
Those desired, expectant faces!

Will our raptures over them
Blind us to their Saviour's splendour?
Shall we less rejoice in Him
For that human joy so tender?

## All Saints

No; for Jesus all the time
Of their love will be the essence;
All the glory of their clime
Comes of His entrancing presence.

Summer's shining meads and streams,
Do they cloud the sun above them?
'Tis his own all-golden beams
Give us to behold and love them.

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